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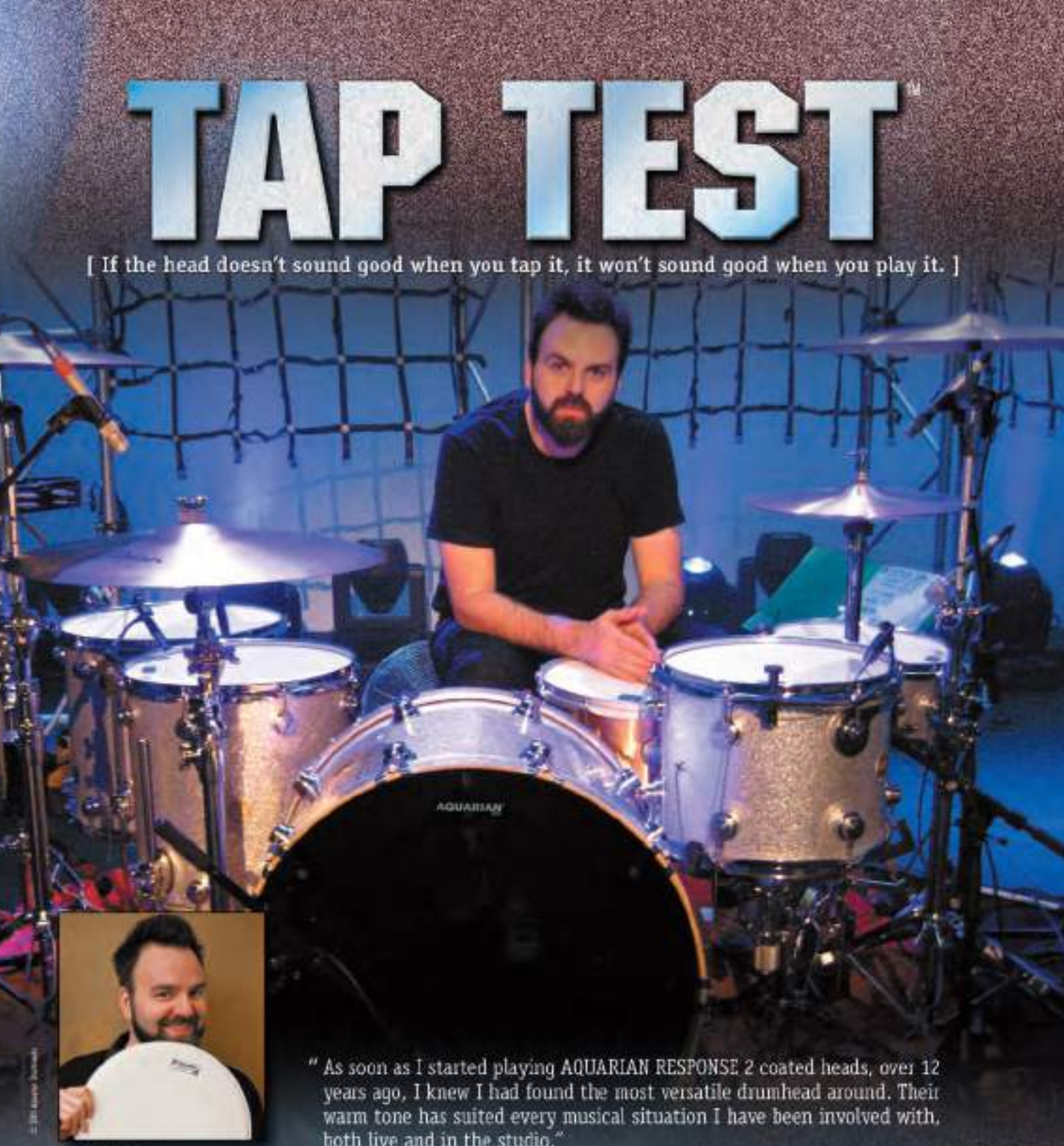

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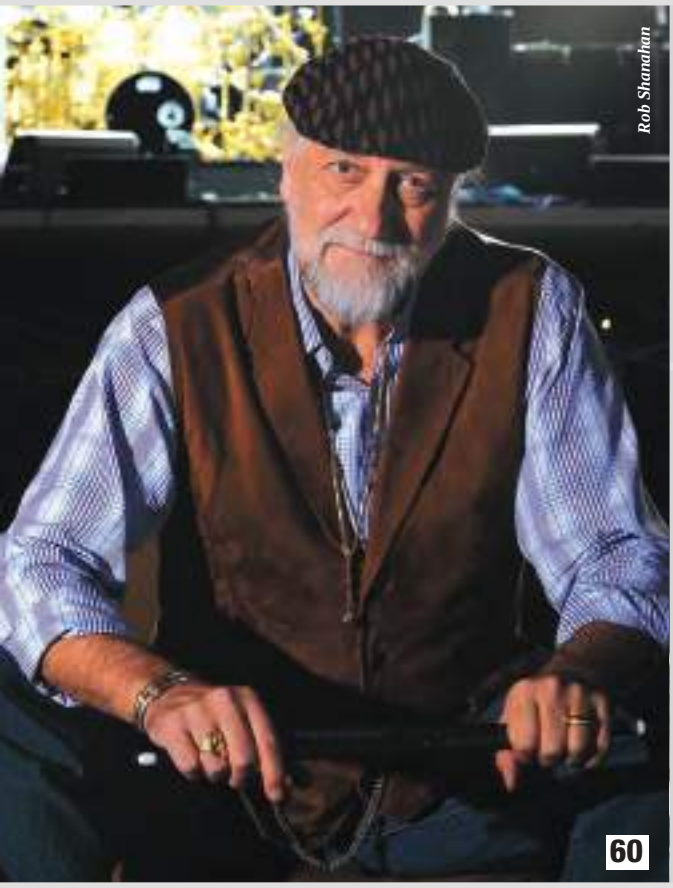
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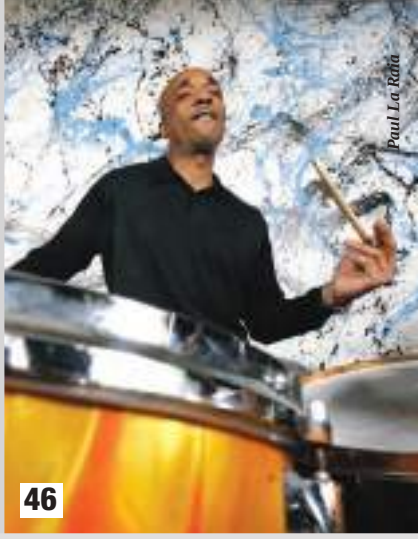
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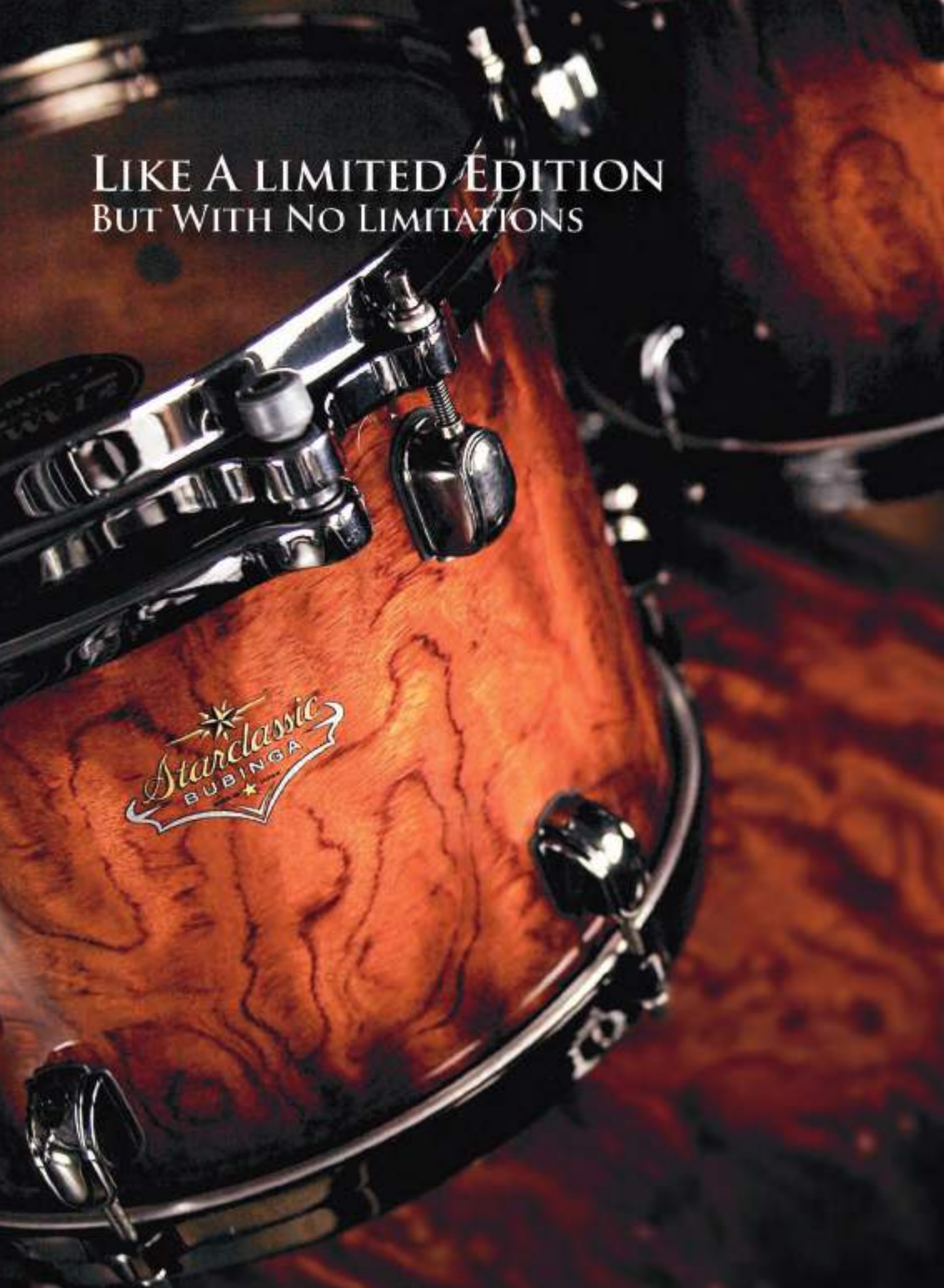
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A BALANCED DIET

As a longtime writer for *Modern Drummer*, I was able to hover somewhat above the fray. I'd dive deep into a given album while writing a review, obsess over a certain drummer while completing an assignment, but then I'd inevitably return to "civilian life." Frankly, I often felt a letdown after I'd submit a piece. As Patrick Berkery, who wrote this month's stellar cover story on the wise and intuitive Mick Fleetwood, could tell you, feature writers travel quite a distance with the people they profile, and it can be a bummer to reach the end of the line. Now that I've joined Adam, Mike, Billy, and the gang full time, though, I get to spend every day plumbing the depths of the world of drums. It's a thrill, and I feel a great sense of responsibility. No more civilian life for me!

Jesse Randall

With our Festival report running in this issue, I have a sense of coming full circle. Would you believe I was in the crowd at the very first Modern Drummer Festival, at Montclair State University, way back in March 1987? I'd been playing for a couple years at the time and pretty much only had eyes for John Bonham, but I left my blue-lit, fuzzy-postered Zeppelin lair for a few hours (yep, the first Fest took place on a single afternoon) to check out some of the other drummers I was reading about in *MD*.

The event made an indelible impression on me. I remember Kenny Aronoff playing a chops-busting fusion-style solo and then deconstructing, in minute detail, his simple yet lip-smacking parts in "Jack And Diane." I remember watching Rod Morgenstein go wild on his big kit and thinking, *Lefties look weird playing the drums.* (I'm a lefty myself! But I've always played righty.) And I remember the wonderful Alan Dawson—a player of *jazz*, which was utterly foreign but unspeakably exotic to my fifteen-year-old ears—leading the audience in a sneaky beat-flipping clapping exercise. Where else but in a room of a thousand drummers could anyone pull off such a feat without immediately hearing the time splinter off into a heap of broken shards?

And I haven't even mentioned the opening and closing performers, Dave Weckl and Steve Gadd (maybe you've heard of 'em?). As amazing as each drummer was that day, in the rear-view mirror the lineup seems even more powerful when considered collectively. Weckl, an up-and-coming fusion ace with the Midas touch; Aronoff, a young popster with unflagging energy and pinpoint control; Morgenstein, a longhaired Southern-prog god; Dawson, a sly and refined professor of the drums; and, well, Steve Gadd, a man who's always risen above tidy descriptors. Together these guys could stand on any stage and simply represent *music*. And that idea goes for any of *MD*'s nineteen Festivals, and none more than last year's rhythmic triumph, which you'll be reading about in a minute—you'll really salivate over the musical examples that we've culled from the artists' backstage interviews.

I imagine Jeremy Hummel, the author of this month's article "Know Your Styles," would appreciate the MD Fest's evenhanded balance of genres. We drummers are fortunate to be part of a group that's marked both by its diversity and its unity—after all, "Check *this* out!" appeals to timekeepers of every stripe, no matter what *this* is. And we all know that boundaries between styles are drawn with a very thin, very flexible dotted line. A little of this, a little of that is key to keeping us inspired, fresh, and well fed, and, as Jeremy's piece suggests, it's ideal to have a balanced diet. Mangia!

—**Michael Parillo,** associate editor

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HUDSON MUSIC

GAVIN HARRISON

Hello, *MD*. Please pardon my English—I am from France. I read your magazine on the 20th of every month when I receive it in the mail, and the January '09 issue with Gavin Harrison taught me very much. I did a search on his band Porcupine Tree and found a genius behind the drums—very intense and emotional playing. I bought the CD *In Absentia* and was in admiration. It took me two weeks to digest it, and I will continue to buy more. Thank you to *MD* for a wonderful story.

Felix

CHURCH DRUMMING

I recently started drumming in a contemporary praise and worship band at a local church. When I received my March issue of *MD* and saw Stephen Brasgalla's article "Drumming In Church" listed in the contents, I quickly jumped ahead to it. I smiled throughout reading it, as many of the things Stephen discussed were spot on with my recent experiences. Church drumming is more popular than ever, and I look forward to reading future articles on the subject. Keep up the good work!

Jim Davis

JOHN McENTIRE

I wanted to send out my most sincere appreciation to *Modern Drummer* for featuring John McEntire in the Ask A Pro section of the February 2009 issue. I have followed Mr. McEntire since 1994, and he's been one of my biggest influences. It means a lot to see him spotlighted, as I've been singing his praises to all the drummers I know and buying my close friends a copy of The Sea And Cake albums *Oui* and *One Bedroom*. I think John is one of the most tasteful, creative, soulful, and clever drummers in the underground Chicago scene. I hope to see more articles on him in the future!

Richie Torrance

CONCEPTS

I was inspired by the December 2008 Concepts article by Eric Behrenfeld, "When One Door Closes." I can relate firsthand to the idea of overcoming crisis with opportunity. In 2007 I was indicted on a charge of conspiracy and sentenced to a federal correctional facility. My career was beginning to take flight when my wings were clipped.

It was providential that I was sent to a minimum-security facility that gives me access to a music department. I recall the feeling I had that first day as I stared at the tattered but intact five-piece Pearl drumkit. Within two months I found myself performing my first-ever concert "on the inside." The show was a huge success. And when I received constant requests and urging from fellow

inmates to perform again, I found a new calling—teaching.

I took on a student and began showing him the basics. Soon I had ten students, and the demand for lessons grew quickly. I now have a waiting list of twenty-five prospective drummers!

I have decided to go back to school upon my release, to earn a degree in music. My students have sparked my passion for drumming, and they've inspired my vehement practice regimen—one I haven't had since I started playing almost twenty-six years ago.

I anxiously await my monthly copy of *MD* for great articles, advice, gear updates, and especially your lesson sections. I would like to thank Eric "Baron" Behrenfeld for his inspirational article and *Modern Drummer* for all the years of delivering the finest drum magazine on the planet!

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WINSTON WATSON

BOB DYLAN'S MID-'90S DRUMMER SHARES HIS TOUR DIARIES ON A BRAND-NEW DVD. SO WHAT WAS IT LIKE PLAYING WITH THE MAN?

Bob Dylan never told me what to play, so "preparation" with him is not what you might think. Dylan doesn't exactly leave the "bread crumbs" you need as a musician—he just wants you to come along. It was like this from the very beginning.

I had no preparation for my first gig with Dylan. My friend Charlie Quintana was Dylan's second drummer in late 1992, playing side by side with Ian Wallace. Charlie had to leave the tour to do a project with Guns N' Roses, so he convinced Dylan to give me a chance to play alongside Ian. I showed up for the gig in Kansas City on September 9, 1992, and didn't even get a set list until twenty minutes before the first downbeat! I said to myself, *I sort of know these songs from the records.* But…big difference! So I just winged it the best I could. Tony Garnier, the MD and bass player, would shout out "Shuffle!" or "Four on the floor!" or whatever, and I made it through somehow. Later we would go over material at soundcheck, and I learned a lot more songs. Within three months, Ian Wallace (my training wheels) was gone, and I was Dylan's only drummer for the next five years.

With Dylan at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, April 23, 1993

Of course, we had many rehearsals, typically before each leg of a tour. But Bob Dylan wants to play a song like Bob Dylan wants to play a song *today*. That is to say that whatever fancies him he does on that night, and it could be different almost every night. Dylan doesn't arrange music to please "the memory embalmers," as he says, but instead likes to mix it up. I've even seen the in-song key change! Sometimes Dylan would shout out what I call "an audible," where he would just scream the name of a song we had never rehearsed, like "Joey!" That's when you had to hold on to your hat, because it could be rocky. The more I played with Dylan, the more I realized I had to rely on my instincts, and that's the way he wanted it.

In terms of grooves to prepare, again, there was no set formula. Even if you had something down cold, you might never get to play it because Dylan does what he feels like every night. We did do a lot of shuffles—sometimes I would shuffle all night, a little behind the beat, a little ahead of the beat…. There are a lot of variations on the shuffle, and I probably played most of them with Dylan.

Winston Watson gets into *all* the details of his five years with Bob Dylan in his new DVD, *Bob Dylan Never Ending Tour Diaries: Drummer Winston Watson's Incredible Journey*. For more, go to bobdylandiaries.com.

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RYAN VAN POEDEROOYEN

DEVELOPING A TERROR SYNDROME

For the last few years, Vancouver native Ryan Van Poederooyen has been making an increasingly loud noise with Canadian prog metal masters The Devin Townsend Band. Indeed, his brutal power and precise metal chops have helped him reach the top ranks of Canadian drummers, a fact supported by his appearance at last year's Vancouver International Drum Festival alongside Flo Mounier of Cryptopsy and Tomas Haake of Meshuggah.

Now Van Poederooyen has stepped out on his own with a face-melting project called Terror Syndrome, featuring Townsend bandmates Dave Young (guitars) and Mike Young (bass), plus vocalist Dave Padden of Canadian thrash giants Annihilator. Van Poederooyen partially credits Porcupine Tree drummer Gavin Harrison for nudging him to start the Syndrome. "Gavin's diversity on the drumkit has inspired my approach in many ways," Ryan says. "I always wanted to start a metal band with talented musicians where I wrote the music and lyrics, and Terror Syndrome gives me that opportunity. My drumming in the group combines creative patterns with intense fills, versatile double kick, and symphonic cymbal work."

Van Poederooyen explains the elements of his outstanding double bass technique: "I'm primarily a heel-up player, and I position my seat so my thighs are slightly higher than my knees. I use the Pearl P-2002 Eliminator double pedal with belt drives, at a medium spring tension. This gives me consistency, controlled speed, and power."

As for developing foot speed and control, Van Poederooyen says, "I practice rudiments with my feet, starting slow and controlled, gradually speeding up, and leading with both feet. I've recently been studying beat displacements and polyrhythms."

The drummer uses a Pearl Reference kit and rack system, Sabian cymbals, Evans heads, and Regal Tip 2BX Ryan Van Poederooyen signature sticks. He continues to work with Devin Townsend, as well as with Ten Ways From Sunday, another progressive band featuring the Young Brothers. When Ryan's not on tour (watch for 2009 Terror Syndrome dates), he's busy with session work, teaching, and drum clinics. For more info, go to myspace.com/terrorsyndromeband or rvpdrums.com.

Mike Haid

UPDATE NEWS

Gavin Harrison is on Ed Poole's *Four*.

The Major Labels, featuring cult pop heroes Bleu, Mike Viola, and **Ducky Carlisle**, have released their debut CD, *Aquavia*.

Denton Hunker is on Green River Ordinance's *Out Of My Hands*. Check out Denton's blog at moderndrummer.com.

Darwin Keys, **Sonny Sanchez**, **Josh Moore**, and **Dwight Baker** are on Adam McInnis's *Wherever You Are*.

Jason Gianni is on Days Before Tomorrow's debut full-length CD, *The Sky Is Falling*.

Ray LeVier's new disc, *Ray's Way*, features guitarists Mike Stern and John Abercrombie.

Jason Finn is touring with The Presidents Of The United States Of America in support of their three recent EPs, *Rot In The Sun*, *Ladybug*, and *Bad Times*.

New York City drummer **Chris DeRosa** is working with Deni Bonet, Monica Allison, Jerry Read & Friends, R&B diva Jenesis, reggae/soca group The Ultimate Symphony Band, and Gospel groups Redeemer and Citilights.

Jon Wilkes is on The Red Jumpsuit Apparatus's latest, *Lonely Road*. You'll find Jon's blog at moderndrummer.com.

DRUM DATES

THIS MONTH'S IMPORTANT EVENTS IN **DRUMMING HISTORY**

Rolling Stones drummer **Charlie Watts** was born on June 2, 1941.

Happy birthday to this month's cover artist, **Mick Fleetwood**, who was born on June 24, 1942.

On June 8, 1974, Paul McCartney's Wings (with Paul playing drums) had the number-one single with "Band On The Run." Two years later, on June 19, 1976, Wings hit number one again with "Silly Love Songs," from the album *Wings At The Speed Of Sound*. This time Paul left the drumming duties to **Joe English**.

On June 1, 1983, The Talking Heads released their critically acclaimed record *Speaking In Tongues*. The album contained one of the band's biggest hits, "Burning Down The House," featuring **Chris Frantz** on drums, **Steve Scales** on percussion and tom-toms, and *Modern Drummer* technical liaison Butch Jones at the board.

Percussion great **Tito Puente** passed away on June 1, 2000.

STEVE SMITH

HEAD, HANDS, FEET, AND "SHOULDERS"

Hudson Music has recently released Steve Smith's DVD *Standing On The Shoulders Of Giants*, which Smith describes as "a detailed look at the drumming of some of the jazz giants who have helped create the vocabulary and concepts of drumming in general."

Smith believes the influence of these particular drummers—Buddy Rich, Art Blakey, Max Roach, Philly Joe Jones, Elvin Jones, and Tony Williams—has transcended the jazz world and is in fact present in all styles of drumming. The DVD title refers to what Steve feels is a debt that we all owe these players. "They developed the ideas that we use to express ourselves today," he explains. "It's important to document and pass on this information, as it may be hard for younger drummers to relate to the concepts and innovations of these drummers without clear and insightful explanations and demonstrations.

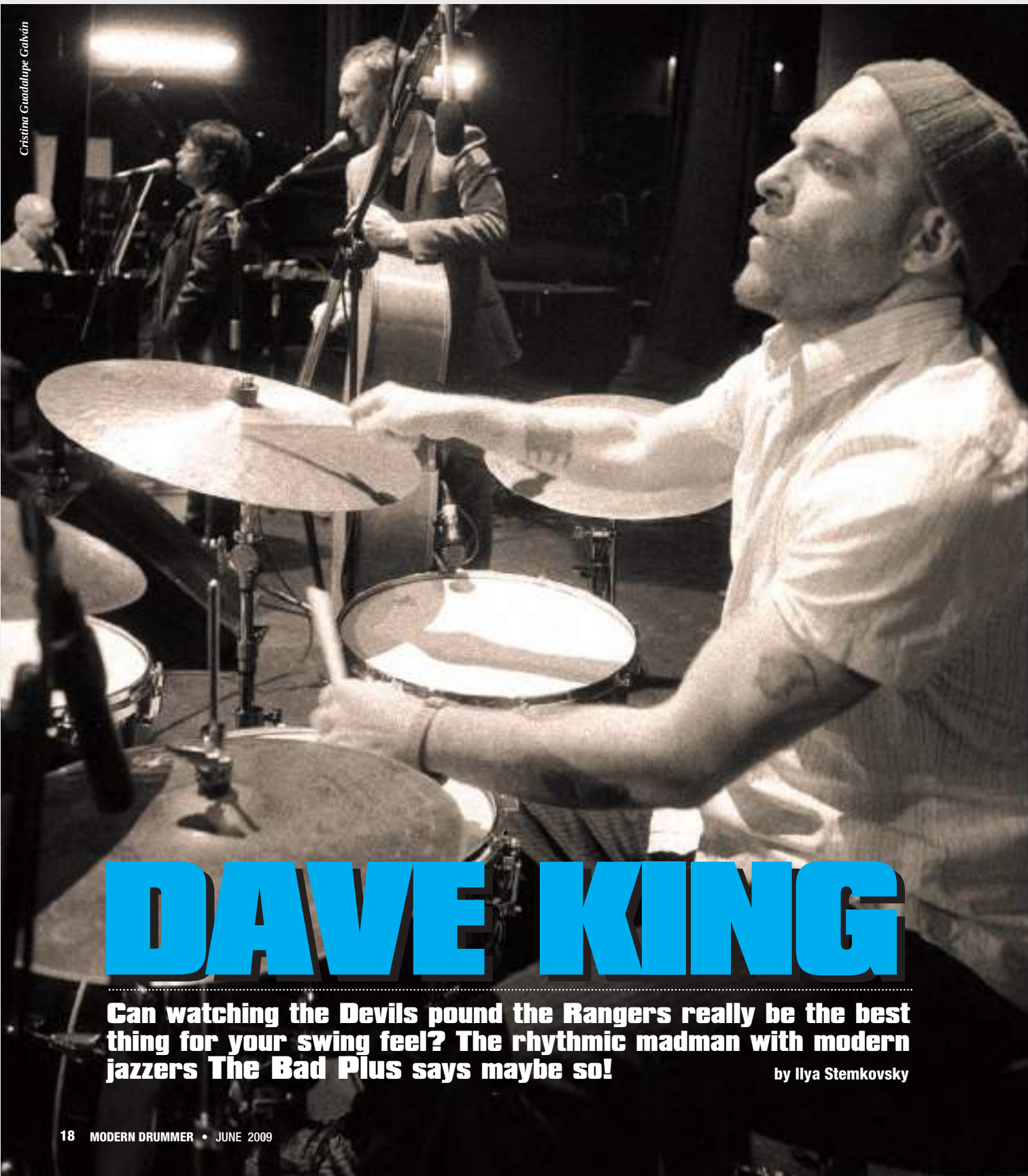
"Professional players will gain some new tools and ideas as well," Smith adds. "On the DVD I'm assisted by the great drummer/educator/author John Riley. His questions and comments are one of the reasons why I feel *Shoulders Of Giants* succeeds in demystifying much of the playing of these masters."

Last year Sonor made a hundred thirtieth-anniversary Steve Smith kits to celebrate the company's long-standing relationship with the drummer. Smith also released the two-volume CD *Jazz Legacy: Live On Tour* on his own Drum Legacy label, and in October he toured extensively with his Jazz Legacy band, the same group featured on the *Shoulders* DVD. This year promises to be just as eventful, as Smith is scheduled to perform at Carnegie Hall with Zakir Hussain's Masters Of Percussion, featuring T.H. Vikku Vinayakram and Giovanni Hidalgo, and play gigs with jazz masters Benny Golson and Buddy DeFranco, plus dates with his new Vital Legacy Band, which is composed of members of Vital Information and Jazz Legacy. And later in the year Steve will reissue the Vital Information recording *Vitalive!*

Robyn Flans

GIMME 10!

PRACTICAL ADVICE FROM
PROS WHO KNOW



Cristina Guadalupe Galván

DAVE KING

Can watching the Devils pound the Rangers really be the best thing for your swing feel? The rhythmic madman with modern jazzers The Bad Plus says maybe so!

by Ilya Stemkovsky

King, who's originally from Minneapolis, exerts his Midwestern energies on The Bad Plus's wildly eclectic records and on stage, drumming with equal parts fiery bombast and textured restraint while always going for it. Dave applies his unique style to other projects as well, such as the BP spin-off Buffalo Collision and the indie jazz group Happy Apple. On its newest release, *For All I Care*, The Bad Plus is joined by vocalist Wendy Lewis and runs through covers of tunes by Nirvana and The Bee Gees, among others. Here's Dave's list of crucial do's and don'ts.

1 IF YOU PLAY JAZZ, IT'S ESSENTIAL THAT YOU FIND A PERSONAL RIDE BEAT. In other words, a way of keeping time on the ride that sounds like you, your pulse, your feel. Getting to the core of the beat takes patience and serious discipline—playing mid-tempo quarter notes with 2 and 4 on the hi-hat for as long as you can. Get inside the tones of your ride, then gradually add the dotted-8th-note accent that forms the "spang-a-lang" nature of a swing beat. Form a loving bond between you and swing, or it will just be a pose and you'll be snuffed out by jazzheads who'll crush your soul with their knowingness of all things swinging. Over the course of your formal study years, listening to yourself and the sound of *you* striking the ride at different volume levels and tempos—while you're also checking out seminal jazz recordings from different periods—is absolutely crucial to your development. It will also help your time immensely. Again, just play the ride, no comping or filling or hotshot riffs.

2 WHEN YOU'RE ON TOUR, DO SOME FORM OF EXERCISE AWAY FROM THE DRUMS EVERY DAY. This seems elemental, but very few people I've toured with actually do it, and they start to unravel as the weeks go on. Yoga is awesome, as are old-school push-ups and crunches. If you have forty-five minutes pre-soundcheck, go for a walk! Don't put in season four of *Aqua Teen Hunger Force* and pound the minibar Snickers until after the gig. Your overall positivity is important, and moods regulate when you get your ass in gear.

3 WRITE LETTERS TO PEOPLE ON THE ROAD. Yep, envelopes and stamps! This has helped me with road boredom in a way that can only be described as profound. I write lots of letters on the road now, and the people who receive them appreciate the effort. Believe me, a few years out of school, you can really forget how to craft a sentence that doesn't sound like a "booty call" text.

4 SPEND SOME TIME AWAY FROM MUSIC AND DRUMS. This whole "I lived on a Burmese mountaintop for twelve years playing my floor tom with my floor tom master" way of practice I find to be wholly unhealthy. It's one thing if your absolute karmic lifeblood revolves around studying Moroccan clappers for thirty years with the ancient tree whisperer of North Africa, but normal music lovers should augment their time with a little visceral indulgence. Seriously, go to a hockey game or watch that crab-fishing show on the Discovery Channel—it's awesome.

5 TRY TO PUT OUT POSITIVE ENERGY WHILE DEALING WITH THE BUSINESS SIDE OF MUSIC. Don't be the type of artist who removes yourself from knowing what's going on with your business because "it gets in the way of my creativity," only to wake up from an art-enlightened stupor to find yourself in a soup line with no health insurance and a publishing deal that has you being paid in Cheez-Its. Know that ultimately you need to have some basic knowledge of business, and that approaching this with positive vigor will go a long way toward attracting the right people to help you get your work out there and your money protected as well.

6 HELP OUT YOUNGER, LESS EXPERIENCED MUSICIANS IN ANY WAY YOU CAN. This will not only nurture the music community as a whole but will add much-needed karma points when the Grammy nominations are announced and you find your avant-garde masterpiece is competing with Beyoncé for Record Of The Year. When it comes to music education and the overall support of young cats, I find that being the patient, experienced, gregarious, attentive mentor is the way to right a lot of wrongs.

7 DON'T GET CAUGHT UP IN THE NEED FOR EXPENSIVE, OUTSIZED, UNNECESSARY GEAR, just because it's in a really well-lit photo next to a girl that makes Pamela Anderson look like Ruth Buzzi. You need a *sound*, not a bass drum pedal that looks like a quantum number theorist designed it. Get some wood drums with some coated heads that aren't too thick, tune them to pitches you like, and develop a touch and stroke that goes beyond hitting and becomes a sort of coaxing. If you're a metal dude, then you might want to beef up to the kind of heads that are as thick as the panels on the roof of the Superdome.

8 DON'T MESS AROUND WITH DRUGS, AND LIMIT DRINKING TO SOME GOOD FRENCH RED WINE. I've noticed that the potheads in my life are ultimately the people who will try to convince me at some point that Sonny Bono was a better guitar player than Allan Holdsworth because they had some "heavy experience" with "I Got You Babe." Red wine and a little dark chocolate are all you need, cowboys!

9 REMEMBER TO WEAR FLIP-FLOPS IN THE SHOWER ON THE ROAD. I can tell you that there are tiny living things on hotel shower floors that, when magnified, look like the creatures from *Where The Wild Things Are*. Hotel rooms are not very clean! And never, I mean *never*, touch a remote control with your bare hand. I wrap mine in Teflon bomb casing and then put on a catcher's glove before using it. I've seen people's thumbs shrivel off just by brushing the pay-channel button.

10 REMEMBER THAT YOU GOT INTO DRUMMING BECAUSE IT'S FUN. And cathartic and beautiful and nuanced and connected to the ancient part of your soul. Powerful and vulnerable and absolutely joyful and painful in a good way!

David Cleary, davidclearyart.com

David Cleary, davidclearyart.com

THE SWELL SEASON'S

GRAHAM HOPKINS

Irish rock's go-to drummer has logged some serious playing miles.
And the road continues to rise in front of him.

by Bob Girouard

It's a gorgeous autumn night in Woodstock, New York, complete with a harvest moon in a starlit sky. Over at Levon Helm Studios, the recording/performance space presided over by the legendary drummer of The Band, another Midnight Ramble concert is about to be in full swing. As usual the room is packed, and the buzz is heavy for opening band The Swell Season. Sitting at stage right, eagerly positioning his snare drum at Levon's kit, is Graham Hopkins. With a constant smile on his face, he looks like a man who's in heaven, soaking up the aura and history around him. When his mates kick into the first song, it's clear he's ready to seize the moment.

Hopkins' style, aggressive and sensitive at once, is in total sync with the music. The drummer begins by laying down a groove on his $6\frac{1}{2}$" DW VLT maple snare, augmented by well-placed ghost notes that embellish the lead vocal. Then, reacting to the shifting dynamics in the mix of acoustic and electric instruments, he punctuates the choruses perfectly, slamming his big ride and crash cymbals and notching it up to incredible heights. It's clear this kind of musicality is not acquired by chance.

Rightly considered one of Ireland's top drummers, Hopkins has an impressive list of credits: My Little Funhouse, Therapy?, Gemma Hayes, Snow Patrol, Dolores O'Riordan, The Frames, and his current affiliation, The Swell Season, an outgrowth of the indie film sensation *Once* and its signature tune "Falling Slowly," which won a 2007 Academy Award for Best Original Song.

The Swell Season is on a tear these days, selling out important venues, recording a sophomore album, and planning a subsequent world tour. *MD* pinned down the drummer for a short chat after his Ramble gig, just before he was to catch a red-eye flight back home to Ireland.

MD: For a new band, The Swell Season has played some very prestigious venues.
Graham: Yes, on this tour alone we played The Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, Massey Hall in Toronto, The Greek Theater in L.A., and Radio City Music Hall in New York. It's been crazy…I mean, we did seven shows in seven days in Texas alone!
MD: The film *Once* has turned into a worldwide phenomenon. How did your connection with The Swell Season come about?
Graham: Bassist Joe Doyle and I have been friends since we were kids, and we played together in My Little Funhouse. Joe went on to join The Frames, and I've played on most of their records. The band in the movie is essentially The Frames, with Glen Hansard on guitar and Marketa Irglova on piano. Glen and Marketa are the stars and composers of *Once*. It began as their project, and we were all on the soundtrack. But when the movie became popular, it took on a whole other dimension. I was then asked to become part of the touring band.
MD: You got an early start playing drums, at age five.

Graham: My dad and my grandfather were both drummers. My father played in a lot of trad and Dixieland bands. He's always been an extremely busy musician—very versatile, which has helped me in my own approach to drums. I was exposed to an incredible amount of music and drummers at an early age.

MD: You were only seventeen when you toured with your first major-label project, My Little Funhouse. What was that like?

Graham: It was pretty surreal! We were signed by Geffen Records. As we were under Guns N' Roses' management at the time, we kind of moved to Los Angeles. We did some support gigs for them, and we learned a lot of valuable musical lessons, especially in the studio, at a very young age.

MD: Early on there was a harder edge to your style, but now you're playing more roots-oriented music. Were those influences already there, or did they evolve later on?

Graham: Well, coming from jazz, they've always been there. When I was twelve or thirteen, I didn't just play along with my favorite records, I put on the radio and played to anything I heard—Led Zeppelin, then maybe an old-time waltz—and I'd encourage any young drummer to try to do that. Later, when I was playing in heavy bands, I was also recording things that didn't in any way resemble what I was doing live.

MD: At thirty-three you have a deep and diverse résumé. What do you feel has been the key to developing your reputation?

Graham: I've always been the kind of guy who got out and met a lot of people. Through that, I'd always be jumping into different musical situations. And in Ireland there's only a certain number of musicians and a limited amount of work. But the Irish scene has always been healthy. Irish history is rich with great music, especially for such a small island.

MD: As your own popularity grows, you've had the opportunity to do some cool projects, like your drum clinic/spectacular in 2003.

Graham: I've done clinics for a while now. When I was in the band Therapy?, Chad Smith of The Red Hot Chili Peppers and I became close mates, and we've done clinics together in the U.K. and Ireland. One time at Slane, a village about forty miles outside Dublin where they have these huge concert events, my band was on the bill with the Chili Peppers. When word got out that Chad and I were thinking about doing another clinic together, the demand was so strong that we had to get a place that could hold about 1,200 people. It sold out within two days.

MD: What do you want to accomplish over the long term?

Graham: I just take every day as it comes. I never played for the purpose of becoming a rock star. Yes, I was enamored with the instrument itself, and always hoped to be in a drum magazine someday—like this! [laughs] But I was never flamboyant about it. What's primary has always been doing my best for the song; that's the thing that really matters most.

TRIGGERING DOODADS

I'm not up on all the electronic doodads out there. But I'm looking to store and trigger different sound-effects samples. I'm *not* looking for different drum sounds. I would like to record myself playing an egg shaker or maracas, store that recording, and trigger it to play for three to four minutes as a loop. I also want the ability to trigger sound effects without looping, while I sit at my kit. Any suggestions?
Greg H.

Several sampler options will get you the results you're looking for, but there's one piece of equipment that's probably perfect for your needs: the Roland SPD-S sampling pad. This compact electronic instrument has nine rubber pads, thirty built-in effects, line/mic inputs (so you can record your shaker grooves), and a CompactFlash card slot for storing files. You can create and edit looped or one-shot samples very easily. The unit also has a ton of preloaded sounds that may already cover the sound effects you're looking to play.

In order to record your own samples, you'll need to get a microphone and a mic cable (preferably with an on/off switch). Shure's Beta 57A is a great choice, since it's a durable dynamic mic that will capture a fairly natural sound.

PRINTING OUT E-DRUM PARTS

I'm interested in playing various exercises on a Roland V-Drums kit and printing out the music for these studies. What's the best software to use?
Rick De Angelo

There are two music notation programs—Finale and Sibelius—that we recommend for this type of application. At *MD*, we use Finale to create our music columns. It's very powerful software that allows you to create everything from simple single-line lead sheets to full-on orchestral scores. A feature in Finale called Hyper-Scribe allows you to record ideas on your computer in real time and display them in the proper notation. You can adjust quantization settings to set a limit for the smallest subdivision that you'll be playing, which will prevent unusual odd-note groupings from appearing in the score when you play slightly out of tempo. Sibelius software has a similar function called Flexi-Time. Both Finale and Sibelius offer demo downloads, so you can check out the programs before you purchase a full version.

Note: Since you're using a Roland V-Drums kit, you'll need to pick up a USB/MIDI interface in order to get the MIDI information from your drums to your computer. M-Audio's MIDISPORT and Uno lines of interfaces are easy and affordable options.

DOUBLE KICK KNEE PAIN

The Doctor Is In
by Asif Khan, M.D.

Every time I move my left foot from my double pedal to my hi-hat, I get a shooting pain on the outside part of my left knee. It's been steadily getting worse over the past six months. The knee is a little swollen and occasionally locks up. Is this a technique problem, or something more serious?
T. Jackson

Based on the movement you describe and the fact that the pain is isolated to the outside part of your knee, you're having trouble with your lateral meniscus, a piece of cartilage between your leg and thigh bones (tibia and femur, respectively) that helps to dampen the impact that the knee takes. The usual problem with this cartilage is a tear, most commonly caused by repetitive twisting of the knee.

The symptoms and signs of a meniscal tear are often vague and nonspecific. A tear usually has to be confirmed by a thorough physical exam and corroborated with an MRI or arthroscopy (a camera in your knee joint).

One way to test your knee is to observe your gait while waddling (walking with short steps, causing your body to tilt slightly from side to side). This movement assesses stability. Duck (squat) waddling is practically impossible if you have a large tear. Another test, called the McMurray maneuver, is used to assess the smooth motion of the knee joint. A painful click or popping sensation is considered abnormal.

Many times the severity of a tear will lead to fluid buildup in the knee joint, called effusion. Sometimes these buildups are so large you can see them without a complete exam. Even if the fluid amount is small, heel-to-buttock motion will be reduced. It sounds like you may have an effusion, and this fluid may need to be removed with a needle to help in recovery.

Until you visit your doctor—which you should do as soon as possible—limit drumming with your left foot until the pain and swelling resolve. Also limit squatting, kneeling, twisting, pivoting, repetitive bending, and jogging. Apply ice to the knee for fifteen minutes every four to six hours with the leg elevated, and take anti-inflammatory medication. Perform straight leg–raise exercises with small weights. Once you can get back to drumming, evaluate the positioning of your double pedal and hi-hat, as this may have been the cause of your problem in the first place.

Dr. Asif Khan is a board-certified internist, specializing in allergy and immunology, with a private practice in northeast Ohio. He also directs the nonprofit organization Passion And Profession (passionandprofession.com), which focuses on career counseling and education. Dr. Khan has been an avid drummer for twenty years and is currently performing with Johnny Hi-Fi (johnnyhi-fi.com).

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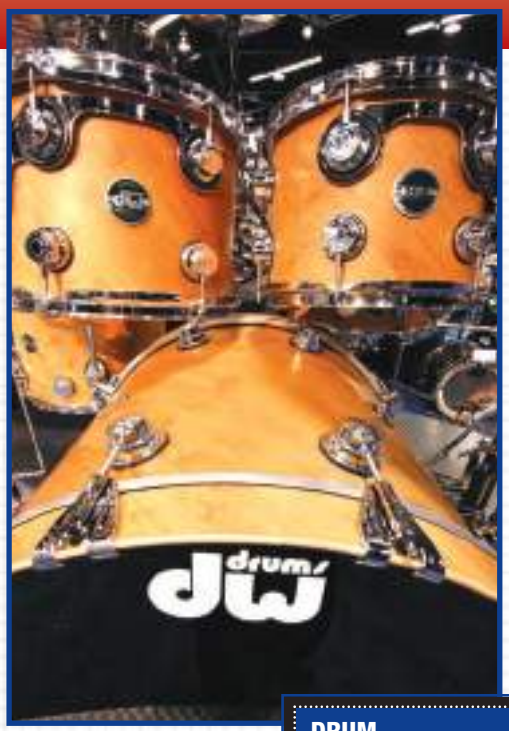
DRUMS

JUST INTRODUCED

At the beginning of each year, drum manufacturers get together in Anaheim, California, for the Winter NAMM Show, to show off their latest and greatest products. Here's a rundown of some of the coolest new releases.

DRUMS



DRUM WORKSHOP
This environmentally friendly Eco-X kit is made from sustainable bamboo/birch shells.
dwdrums.com

AHEAD
Ahead snare drums are now available with quick-release Brunson lugs, which are lightweight and easy to install. These lugs are also available separately.
bigbangdist.com

DDRUM
This hybrid acoustic/electronic kit comes with internal triggers and shell-mounted XLR inputs.
ddrum.com

FAMOUS DRUMS
The Turbine snare features internal blades of wood to eliminate excessive ring and to create a naturally compressed sound.
famousdrums.com

CRAVIOTTO
Only a hundred of these gorgeous solid-copper Diamond series snare drums will be produced (fifty $5\frac{1}{2}$x14 and fifty $6\frac{1}{2}$x14).
craviottodrums.com

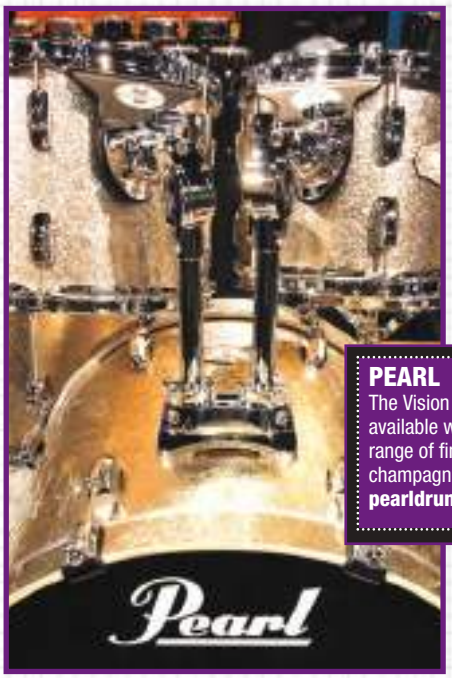
BRADY
In addition to displaying a plethora of high-end drums, including stave bamboo Kosaka tribute and wandoo block "Love Shack" snares, Brady made a big impact with a prototype thin-shell spotted gum kit.
bradydrums.com

GRETSCH
Gretsch USA has released a cool red-and-black Harlequin setup with a matching wood rack, and a Heritage Bop kit in "vintage oyster white."
gretschdrums.com

FORD
New Maverick series snares have an indestructible textured finish.
forddrums.com

GEORGE WAY
Way has expanded its snare line-up to include Elkhart copper and Indy bronze models.
waydrums.com

MAPEX
Chris Adler's affordable signature 5½x12 Black Panther walnut snare features a large Lamb Of God eagle graphic, an Aquarian High-Energy batter head, and black chrome–plated hardware.
mapexdrums.com

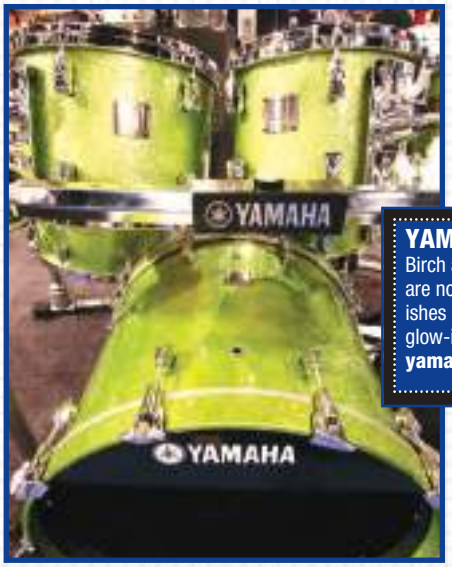


PEARL
The Vision series is now available with a wider range of finishes, like champagne sparkle.
pearldrum.com

LUDWIG
Ludwig has revamped its entire lineup of entry- to professional-level kits. The Epic X Over series features a blended shell with walnut/maple/walnut inner and outer plies, a poplar core, and 2-ply birch reinforcement rings.
ludwig-drums.com

ROGERS
The revived Rogers line remains at the budget price point but is getting closer to its classic heritage with the release of some vintage-looking Delmar finishes.
rogersdrumsusa.com

PEACE
The Manhattan Stage II is a four-piece cocktail drumset that includes two toms and redesigned cymbal and hi-hat arms to improve positioning flexibility. A 5½x14 snare and an 18x14 bass drum complete the kit.
peacedrum.com



TAMA
The new mid-price Starworks series features unique limited-release wrap finishes.
tama.com

YAMAHA
Birch and Maple Custom Absolute kits are now available in sharp sparkle finishes like "white grape" (shown) and the glow-in-the-dark "luminous white."
yamaha.com

SONOR
Danny Carey's 8x14 signature bronze snare is covered with talisman symbols and is finished with an engraving of the Tool drummer's signature.
sonor.com

ROLAND
The TD-4S V-Drums kit includes a new module that features ambient effects optimized for drums. For easy access, the module is mounted in the center of a new four-leg rack.
rolandus.com

CYMBALS

ISTANBUL AGOP
Istanbul Agop is releasing a handful of signature products for some of the most acclaimed drummers working today, including Joey Waronker and Matt Chamberlain rides (shown), additional models for Lenny White's Epoch line, and dark-finish rides and hats for Cindy Blackman (called the OM series).
istanbulcymbals.com

ZILDJIAN
K Custom Hybrid Trash special-effects splash and crash cymbals have a dark China-inspired sound.
zildjian.com

PAISTE
Black Alpha and Twenty series cymbals were prominently displayed at Paiste's booth.
paiste.com

MEINL
Rodney Holmes' earthy but clean-sounding 13" Spectrum hi-hats complement the jazz/fusion drummer's acclaimed 22" Spectrum ride.
meinlcymbals.com

BOSPHORUS
A new Master Vintage line of jazz cymbals was introduced. Here they are set up alongside Stanton Moore's new titanium snare drum.
bosphoruscymbals.com

SABIAN
Sabian buried a hundred 21" Artisan medium rides to be unearthed and sold later this year.
sabian.com

PERCUSSION

GON BOPS
Gon Bops showed several cool Peruvian cajons, fifty-fifth anniversary congas and bongos, Alex Acuña Special Edition drums, and this solid stave–shell snare drum.
gonbops.com

PEARL
The DjemBass conversion kit turns a djembe into an 808-sounding bass drum. Pearl's Q-Popper auxiliary snare is another great drum 'n' bass–style instrument.
pearldrum.com

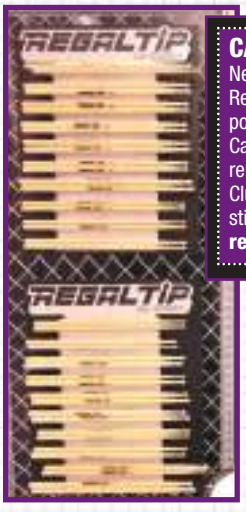
LATIN PERCUSSION
This cool Micro Snare produces an awesome drum 'n' bass sound.
lpmusic.com

TOCA
Toca artist Sheila E has a complete line of signature timbales, congas, and bongos.
toca.com

MEINL
In addition to a vast array of new congas, bongos, djembes, and cajons, Meinl Percussion has released a bunch of cool tambourines, including this ABS Recording-Combo that can be mounted on a stand or hand held.
meinlpercussion.com

HARDWARE/ACCESSORIES

PEARL
The super-fast and smooth Eliminator Demon Drive pedal can be adjusted in every possible way in order to get the optimal feel, including converting the footboard from a standard setup to a longboard design.
pearldrum.com



CALATO/REGAL TIP
New artist models from Regal Tip include pop/fusion great Keith Carlock's 8A-inspired barrel tip and rocker Tommy Clufetos' mammoth 313 stick.
regaltip.com

DRUM WORKSHOP
DW's extensive hardware line now features the heavy-duty 8000 series, which includes this kick pedal, whose hinge is located at the end of the footboard.
dwdrums.com

GIBRALTAR
The Hybrid Mounting Pod allows you to add cymbals to your setup without using extra tripods.
gibraltarhardware.com

BIG BANG
Bass Drum O holes are now available on precut Remo heads.
bigbangdist.com

EVANS
This wall of heads displays the G-Plus, GMAD, and black-finish Onyx models, among others.
evansdrumheads.com

KICKPORT
This simple device fits into the hole of a resonant-side bass drum head to produce enhanced low-end response and accentuated beater attack.
futurepercussionconcepts.com

VIC FIRTH
Moving beyond wood and nylon, Vic Firth added stick models featuring Silver Bullet aluminum (for a super-bright sound) and Soft Touch felt tips (for warm tones).
vicfirth.com

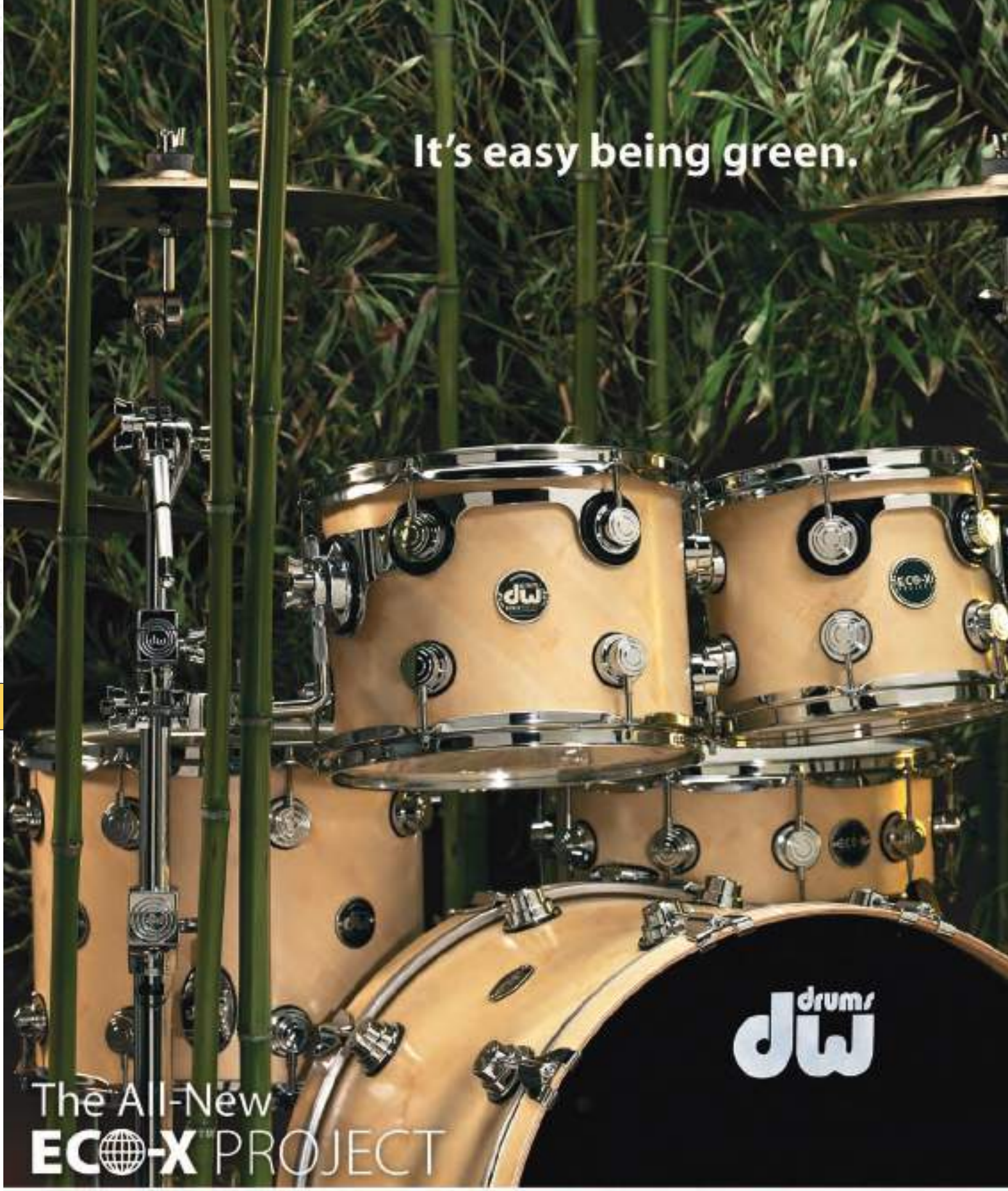
REMO
Vintage Emperor heads are a reissue of a 1960s design that was constructed using two plies of 7.5 mil polyester film.
remo.com

SILVERFOX
Not only did SilverFox announce the release of a Trevor Lawrence Jr. signature stick, but it also displayed some cool alternative sounds, like the Clawstix, Swiskas, and Foxtail.
silverfoxpercussion.com

VATER
Vater released a line of white-stained round-tip Gospel sticks, as well as these dark-finish Eternal Black sticks, which include Warrior, Punisher, and Destroyer models for hard-hitting drummers.
vater.com

YAMAHA
Yamaha's drum hardware got a serious upgrade that includes new footboard designs on bass drum pedals and hi-hat stands, a ball-and-socket basket adjustment on snare stands, Free Step cymbal tilters, and foot spikes for extra stability.
yamaha.com

To see more new products from NAMM, go to **moderndrummer.com/the-showroom.php**.



Bamboo never sounded so good. Actually, it's bamboo and birch that make up these eco-friendly shells. These two sustainable resources, combined with DW's sonically-innovative X shell technology and a host of professional, drummer-friendly features, put the all-new Eco-X Project in a class by itself. Now it's easy to go green and sound good doing it. **The Eco-X Project, Environmentally sound.**

www.dwdrums.com

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MODERN DRUMMER DIGITALLY ENHANCED

TAYE STUDIOBIRCH KIT

by Anthony Riscica

Taye has been in the musical instrument business since 1975 but stayed mostly under the radar until the last couple of years. That's because the company was behind the scenes making drums and hardware for *other* instrument manufacturers until 1999. It was then that Taye decided to develop its own line of drums, based on the idea, according to TayeDrums.com, that "good drums need not cost a fortune and should be widely accessible." Today Taye has blossomed into a full-on drum company offering a wide variety of drums and hardware.

FIRST INSPECTION

The StudioBirch kit has Taye's standard rectangular die-cast lugs, which are separated from the shell by plastic risers. All of the drums except the kick came with triple-flange hoops and Dynatone drumheads, which are comparable to Remo Ambassadors. The rack toms came equipped with Taye's sturdy and sleek suspension mounts.

6000 SERIES HARDWARE

Also included with this kit was Taye's top-of-the-line, double-braced 6000 series hardware pack, with two cymbal stands, a hi-hat stand, a snare stand, a throne, a kick pedal, and a boom arm that slides into the bass drum mount to hold the rack toms in place. The hardware is big and beefy, so if you plan to take this set to gigs with awkward load-ins, you might want to consider something a little lighter so as not to break your back.

One piece of hardware worth special note is the throne. The seat was moderately lightweight but sturdy, with a nice wide base. The top was super-comfortable, and it sported a wide bicycle-seat shape with a velvetlike fabric that kept me from sliding around while I played.

HITTING THE TOMS

The StudioBirch toms came tuned to a medium-high tension, which suited them beautifully. They had an open, vintage-style sound that was reminiscent of some '70s Ludwig kits I've played, while the birch shells added a little more punch and volume. The attack was nice and round but had enough impact to come through in any musical style. Tuning the toms was easy, which is a testament to their smart construction.

I tried tuning down the toms to see how low they could go. They proved to have great range, but their naturally open tone meant a thicker double-ply head would be recommended for lower tunings to keep the drums from sounding thin and papery.

Because the kit came with four toms (10", 12", 14", and 16"), I could mix and match the drums to suit any performance situation. For a jazz trio gig, for instance, I used the 10" and 14" toms. I tuned them back up to medium-high, and they sounded great. Then I used the 12", 14", and 16" toms for a rock session at my studio. That combo was just what I needed. I tuned them low and found a great combination of tone and impact.

BIGGER KICK

The 18x22 StudioBirch kick is fairly large, so it's not extremely versatile. But it packs a wallop. Although I wouldn't use this drum for a jazz gig, it was perfect for heavier situations. The birch shell adds more attack than you'd normally get from a maple drum, and it serves up a good deal of low end. Even at a higher tuning I could feel the bass frequencies in my chest, although I needed some internal muffling to cut down the ring a bit. At a lower tuning, the kick sounded good both when left unmuffled and when I used just enough dampening to keep the heads from ringing uncontrollably. I preferred the latter approach, as it allowed the drum's naturally full and deep tone to push through without excessive overtones.

The kick also has some interesting hardware features. The sliding track mount is used for mounting toms on the bass drum without the need for a hole in the bass drum shell. The kick's unique key rods/claws have plastic inserts that serve as anchors for the key rods as they sit in the claws, which prevents any metal-on-metal contact and makes tuning extra smooth.

WORKHORSE SNARE

My favorite part of this kit was the 6x14 snare. It came tuned high and sounded super-funky with a slightly choked sound. When left unmuffled, the drum rang out with a nice high tone, and rimshots sounded full. With a bit of muffling, the tone turned into a tight "crack" that reminded me of some of the sounds Clyde Stubblefield used to get with James Brown. This tight tuning worked for jazz playing too. But I found that tuning the batter head down a little opened up the drum for more sensitive strokes.

I then dropped down the tuning to medium and low tensions to see what would come out. The lower I tuned the head, the fatter the sound was, without any loss of quality. At a very low tuning, I found a heavy sound that hit me in the chest. This snare could be tuned to any tension and still sound great.

I really liked the throw-off on this drum. Unlike a lot of other designs that fall away from or to the side of the drum, Taye's flips down a full 180º. This was great because it prevented the throw-off arm from getting lodged in my thigh when I had to disengage the snares to play certain songs.

IN CONCLUSION

With a list price around $2,700 for the StudioBirch kit, Taye is living up to its mantra of good drums not needing to cost a fortune. This set not only sounds and looks great, but it can be tuned and configured to fit just about all your needs. Add Taye's cool hardware features, and you have a pro kit with all the trimmings. If you haven't checked out Taye drums yet, now might be a good time—they're no longer under the radar.

tayedrums.com

EASY ON THE EYES

StudioBirch series drums are made with 7-ply premium-birch shells, which are very well manufactured and have a smooth and uniform bearing edge. The set we received for review was done in "galaxy ice" lacquer, which is a pearly white with a subtle sparkle. I was very pleased with the finish, as was everyone else who saw the kit.

TAYE

GMS

REVOLUTION SNARES by Anthony Riscica

GMS's latest achievement, the Revolution series, consists of snare drums that offer a unique combination of wood and metal sounds. The company starts with a standard maple shell, which is available in every size you can think of. Then liquid metal is applied to the shell. No joke—the guys at GMS found a company with a patented process for turning metal into a liquid that can be sprayed, and the drum maker uses this technology to produce wood drums with a thin coating of brass, copper, bronze, or steel on the inside and/or outside surfaces. These are drums the likes of which we'd never seen before.

DREAM DRUMS

When I was sixteen years old and ready to buy my first professional drumkit, I chose to go with the GMS Drum Company, based in Long Island, New York. I had seen their custom sets, and I just *had* to have one. Since that time, GMS has gone from a small drum maker offering only two custom models to a company that makes hardware, acrylic tube toms, and everything in between. Now GMS has an innovative line of snares dubbed the Revolution series.

THE SOUND

Revolution series snares offer the resonant sound of wood with the reflective qualities of metal. The shell still feels like wood, but the sound bounces around inside the drum the way it would with a metal snare. This gives you a little more of the "kang" sound that's associated with metal drums.

My favorite of the models we received for review was a beautiful sunburst-finish $6^1/_2$x14 drum with an interior coating of brass. This snare had tons of character and sounded amazing when hit anywhere on the head and at any velocity. I used it first on a rock gig where I was hitting hard the entire night. The drum projected at the perfect volume and didn't lose any of its tone when given a pounding. The brass interior gave it a little extra cut, without taking away from the woodiness of the drum.

A week later I took the same snare to a jazz trio gig at a venue that was about the size of my living room. In this setting the drum had outstanding sensitivity and reacted to the lightest of taps. Rimshots were nonabrasive and colorful, reminding me a bit of Bill Stewart's snare sound. When hit in the center, the drum retained some overtones but produced a rounder sound with great snare response. This baby could really do it all.

We also received drums lined with copper and steel. The 5x14 copper model—like all Revolution snares—came equipped with GMS's Special Edition lugs. What made this drum different was that it was sprayed with copper both inside and out. The metal on the outside had oxidized, giving the shell a cool vintage look. This was the only drum that came with die-cast hoops (all of the others had triple-flange versions) and it produced a powerful "crack," due to the rims and copper coating. It didn't have the same versatility as the $6^1/_2$x14 brass drum, but it still sounded great. The rims seemed to choke out some of the overtones that were so appealing in the brass drum, leaving behind a tight, dry sound.

Two steel-lined drums—a $5^1/_2$x13 and a $6^1/_2$x14—came to us. The 13" was right at home with a medium-high tuning, where it popped with considerable volume and a huge tone that would be ideal in a hip-hop or R&B setting. The 14" drum had a similar sound and feel but was more suited for rock or punk, where volume and fullness of sound are more crucial. I could hear and feel the differences between these harder steel-lined drums and the softer copper- and brass-lined versions. The sound seemed to bounce inside the steel drums a bit more, giving them more edge and a more solid feel than the other models.

SUMMING UP

GMS deserves a round of applause for the innovative thinking behind the Revolution series. But when you consider the company's execution in making drums that *sound* this good, the applause turns into a standing ovation. Even if you're not in the market for a new snare, you should check out these drums if you have the chance. Two thumbs up.

gmsdrums.com

TURKISH

XANTHOS JAZZ, XANTHOS CAST, AND ZEPHYROS SERIES

by Dave Previ

With centuries of cymbal-making history in its books, Turkey has long been a consistent source of quality cymbals. The Turkish cymbal company is sticking with traditional methods while also pushing the limits of cymbal making to create a wide variety of looks and sounds for today's drummers.

XANTHOS JAZZ

The Xanthos Jazz series has an interesting look. The outer third of the top surface and the bell are completely unfinished, while the inner portion is finely lathed. This technique is no doubt used to bring out both dry and bright sonic qualities from the metal. I enjoyed the clear stick articulation of the 21" ride when I used it on a funk gig. The attack cut through amplified instruments easily, while the low overtones established a blanket of controlled wash.

The 20" and 21" ride cymbals were nicely balanced, which made them easy to play. They opened up when pushed, but they also responded with sensitivity to lighter strokes. The raw bells cut clearly when I hit them with the shoulder of the stick, but I had to make sure to play them in the same spot to achieve a consistent sound. Otherwise the tone changed as the stick struck different areas of the bell.

The versatile 14" Xanthos Jazz hi-hats became my go-to cymbals. They had a nice mellow way about them but still provided a sharpness that helped drive the beat. In a studio session, they added warmth to the vintage drum sound we were going for. The hats also fit right in with a jazz guitar quintet and added welcome grit to the pocket of my funk band. They were a little too laid back for the needs of my pop group, but overall they proved themselves to be a great pair of cymbals.

The odd-size 11" Xanthos Jazz splash lacked clarity in both the high and low frequencies and had a very metallic twang. Its dynamic range was too limited; I had to *really* lay into it to get a true splash sound. The inverted 10" model with rivets, however, was a blast to play. Because of its inside-out shape, it stacked easily on a crash without the two cymbals interfering with one another. I went to this little guy often for horn hits, and I loved the creative ideas it inspired me to play.

ZEPHYROS SERIES

Zephyros is a darker line than the Xanthos, in terms of both looks and sound. I took these cymbals with me on a cocktail-hour trio gig, and their complex low end was a good choice for the low-volume situation. The thin cymbals reacted quickly to my strokes with a clear, woody stick sound and offered a nice blend of low and high tones. When struck with the shoulder of the stick, they let out a lasting wash.

Like the Xanthos, the 16" Zephyros crash provided a good ride sound during solos. It also got out of the way quickly when crashed. The hi-hats had a fluffy foot splash that was easily obtainable, and their "chick" was deep yet unobtrusive. The splash cymbal worked for me only when I gave it a strong whack.

These cymbals would be good for a singer-songwriter gig, as they would stay out of the way of the vocals while adding complexity to the band sound, particularly in a small venue.

XANTHOS CAST

When I tested these heavier "rock" cymbals with my funk band, the 14" hi-hats stood out. My groove benefited from their tight, throaty closed sound. And the band liked what they heard as I opened the hats gradually in preparation for a chorus, where I stomped out upbeat 8th notes to keep the energy flowing.

As I went to the 20" Cast ride in the heat of the moment, however, I was a bit disappointed by the lack of attack. My 8th notes were lost in a wash, while I had hoped for a more pointed sound. This ride redeemed itself in the studio, though—when I used it as a crash. It responded instantly and powerfully to my energetic lashing, adding vast explosions to the track I was recording. The 16" crash rounded out the setup with a higher-pitched version of similar qualities. Together the ride and crash sounded great for accenting the hits within the tune.

The Xanthos Cast flat ride was a bit of a dichotomy. I don't see where a flat ride with rivets fits into a rock series. But that could just be me. The cymbal had a decent medium-volume ride sound, but it fell short at other volumes, largely due to having too many rivets. These eight rivets choked the sustain too much for my taste, making the cymbal a limited performer.

SUMMARY

Overall, Turkish cymbals have made a positive first impression. They have a wide variety of sounds, and the quality of craftsmanship is quite high. I look forward to seeing what this company comes up with in the future. With some minor adjustments to the splashes and flat rides, all three of these lines would be very versatile and complete for many different genres of music.

turkishcymbals.com

SWEEPING SUSTAIN

The 18" Xanthos Jazz crash performed quite well as an alternate ride source when paired with the 20" or 21" ride. The initial crash sound was fairly bright, but the decay became less sharp as the vibrations moved from the middle of the cymbal to the outer edge. This is a very subtle attribute, and you probably wouldn't notice it while playing with a band. But it helped me understand how lathed versus unlathed surfaces affect a cymbal's overall sound.

CREATION DRUMS

NESTING KIT

by Michael Dawson

Creation is a small New Jersey–based company that builds made-to-order kits and component drums in a wide variety of styles, sizes, and configurations. In addition to providing many of the high-end features that are common among custom manufacturers (such as exotic veneers, offset lugs, wood hoops, and tube lugs), Creation also offers a unique option—the Nesting kit—that allows drummers to have a full-size setup that can be collapsed into a single drum case for easy transport.

HOW IT WORKS

The basic design behind Creation's Nesting kit is fairly simple but quite brilliant. Both the 20x20 bass drum shell and the 12x14 floor tom shell are cut into two parts, which are held together by large metal clasps. When it's time to break down the kit, the 9x10 rack tom fits snugly inside the floor tom (with the help of a few foam blocks), which then slips inside the bass drum along with the $4^{3}/_{4}$x14 snare. When it's completely packed up, the entire kit, minus hardware and cymbals, can be carried in a 20x20 bass drum case.

In terms of compactness, this kit is a clear winner, especially if you're like me and you often travel to shows with three bandmates, plus everyone's gear, crammed into a single hatchback. The only downfall of stuffing an entire four-piece drumkit into one case is that it's very heavy. Unless you're built like the Hulk, I wouldn't recommend trying to heave the Nesting kit overhead as you zigzag your way through a crowd on your way to the stage. You'd be much better off wheeling the kit into a venue on a nice sturdy handcart.

HOW IT SOUNDS

Before I played the set, I suspected that having segmented kick and floor tom shells would adversely affect the sound. But to my surprise, the drums sounded as big, full, and resonant as any Keller-shell kit I've played in recent memory. The extra-deep 20x20 bass drum was particularly impressive, as it had a strong and focused punch with a reasonable amount of low-pitched "boom" that worked great for funk/ fusion grooves. Part of the drum's nice sound was a result of its 8-ply birch shell, which Creation uses because, says company owner Greg Abrom, "birch has naturally lower frequencies, making the 20x20 drum sound larger than it really is."

The toms on our review kit were made out of 8-ply maple shells. I was pleasantly surprised by how well the tone of the uncut rack tom blended with the segmented floor tom. Both drums offered warm resonance and controlled decay time, and they had a natural timbre that sat well in the low-mid tuning range. That tuning created a nice pitch-bending "doom" from the rack tom and a thumping "smack" from the floor tom. Like the kick, these toms sounded best in pop/funk/fusion applications. And they recorded beautifully.

The $4^{3}/_{4}$x14 snare we received had a 10-ply maple shell with a swiveling Dunnett throw-off. This was a great all-around drum that sat well in a medium-tight zone, where the warm resonance of the shell was complemented by a musical "crack" that would jump through a mix. You could use this drum on just about any gig, as it was sensitive enough for brushes and light jazz while also having the extra body needed for rock and pop.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

If I hadn't recently bought a load of old Slingerland drums off Craigslist, I'd seriously consider purchasing a Nesting kit. They sound terrific, and they're built with the craftsmanship you'd expect from handmade drums. Being able to fit an entire four-piece set into one bass drum case would make weekend excursions with my indie rock band much easier, since we inevitably spend the first half hour of our trips trying to figure out how to cram drums, hardware, cymbals, pedals, guitars, amps, and luggage into one car. If I got a Nesting kit, I'd probably go with a more exotic and sturdier wrap finish, since the gray stain seemed a little flat and probably wouldn't hold up to the rigors of one-off club dates. But that's the good thing about buying custom drums: You can get whatever you want.

creationdrums.com

TRAVELER'S GEAR

Creation's Nesting kit is a full-size alternative to other companies' compact drumsets that rely on smaller drums to promote portability. The Nesting kit we were sent for review came with a deep 20x20 birch kick drum, 9x10 and 12x14 maple toms, and a $4^{3}/_{4}$x14 maple snare. All Nesting kit drums feature aircraft aluminum lugs. This particular set, which is finished with a gray stain, retails for $2,220. Custom-configured Nesting kits, including ones with larger drums, are also available.

To hear a selection of the products reviewed this month, go to the Multimedia page at **moderndrummer.com.**

INTRODUCING

THE AAX X-PLOSION FAST CRASH.

AAX is Modern Bright. The latest sound in its category from our award-winning Vault Team. With its innovative AAX 'Dynamic Focus' design, this thinner, faster variation of our X-Plosion Crash concept delivers bright, cutting accents at every volume. The AAX X-Plosion Fast Crash... touch sensitivity, shimmering sounds, and the power to be heard. **Hear more at sabian.com**

SABIAN

BECAUSE SOUND MATTERS

Building A Small Stage-Monitoring System **PART 1:** MICS AND MIXERS

by John Emrich

When you play live, house PA and monitoring systems are often your only way to hear yourself and the rest of your band. Sometimes the monitors, whether they're in-ears or traditional floor wedges, sound great and the house mix is slamming, which makes you feel totally comfortable on stage. But those situations are rare. Most small clubs lack a good sound system, which can cause you to strain to hear the vocals, the lead guitar lines, or even your own bass drum. And if you use electronic percussion, a bad monitor mix can leave you feeling stranded as you air-drum your way through the gig.

To avoid this dreadful I-can't-hear-myself scenario, you should consider putting together a monitoring system that can also be used to send a balanced house mix to your sound engineer. This article will discuss some essential concepts of sound reinforcement, starting with basic mixer options and microphone setups.

SMALL MIXERS

Companies like Mackie and Yamaha make good small-format mixers that are ideal for personal systems. The Mackie VLZ and CFX and the Yamaha MG series offer great bang for the buck. Some of these models even include effects such as reverb and compression, which can be very useful with drums.

As you begin to put together your sound system, think about what you need and make sure that a given mixer has enough inputs to handle your equipment. Each microphone, for instance, requires a separate channel with an XLR connector. For electronics and computer-based VST instruments, you'll most often be dealing with stereo channels that have $^1/_4$" outputs. You might want to choose a small mixer that can grow along with your setup. It's a good idea to have a few extra channels, even if you don't need them right now. And sometimes mixer channels short out on the gig, so having extra inputs can be a lifesaver.

GETTING STARTED WITH MICROPHONES

Mic choice and placement make a huge difference in your reinforced sound. For a simple approach, begin with two overhead microphones. The Shure SM81 is a standard for overhead mics, but you should also check out other models, at various price points, such as the Audio-Technica 4041, AKG 451 and C1000S, Sennheiser e614, M-Audio Pulsar II, and Violet Finger. These are small-diaphragm mics that will yield excellent results. Large-diaphragm microphones such as the Shure KSM44 and the Audio-Technica 4040 also work great as overheads. A small-diaphragm mic, however, will usually last longer and will be easier to place over your kit.

PLACING OVERHEADS

The X-Y technique involves overlapping microphone capsules at 90–110° angles (photo 1). Most often the overheads are placed above the snare, in

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order to keep the drum in the center of the mix. You can change the width of the stereo image by adjusting the angle

between the microphone diaphragms: A smaller angle will tighten up the image, while a larger angle will cause the mix of your kit to sound more spread out.

ORTF (Office de Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française, originated by the French Broadcasting System) is another stereo miking technique that places the mic capsules facing out from one another (photo 2). For this setup, the

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microphone diaphragms should be seventeen centimeters apart, with the capsules at an angle of 110°. This simulates your listening experience, with the mics placed in a similar position as your ears are on your head.

A third approach to overheads, which is very popular with drums, is to place one microphone over each of side of the drumset. Both mics should be positioned at the same height and at equal distance from the throne. Some engineers use a piece of rope as a measurement tool for setting overheads. To do this, hold one end of the rope in the center of your stool. Use the other end of the rope to measure a consistent height and distance for your microphones. If you end up with a lot of bleed from amps or other instruments on stage, lower the mics closer to the set and point them slightly toward you.

If you decide to go with an X-Y or ORTF setup, you can get away with using a stereo mounting bar on a single mic stand. Just make sure the stand is heavy-duty enough that it won't tip over when you're playing. Still, I recommend using two tall boom stands for overhead mics regardless of the positioning, because they'll be easier to get into place and less likely to fall.

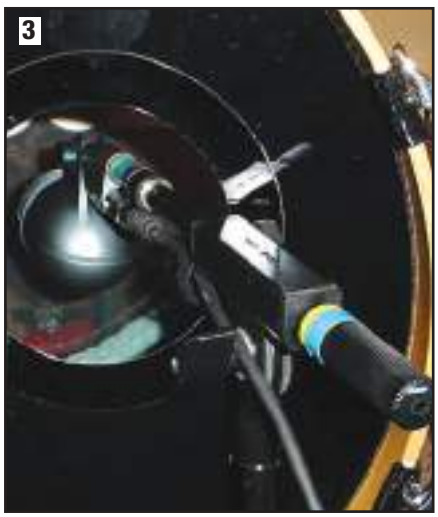
ADDING A BASS DRUM MIC

If overhead microphones alone don't provide enough reinforcement, the next step is to mike the kick. Some great bass drum mics are the Shure Beta 52, Audix D6, Sennheiser 421, AKG D112, and Electro-Voice RE20.

The placement of a mic will depend on whether or not you use a full front head on your bass drum. If the head has a small hole, you can position a mic inside the drum to get a good isolated sound that doesn't include a lot of bleed from other instruments. A great starting point is in the center of the drum, with the mic pointed at the batter head (photo 3). If you're a loud player, you could overdrive a microphone if it's pointed directly at the beater. In this case, shift the mic a bit so it points more toward the rim, or use a pad (attenuator) on the mic to get a more manageable signal.

The closer a microphone is to the batter head, the more impact sound ("click") it will pick up. As you move the mic back toward the front head, you will get more tone ("boom"). By adjusting the placement, you can dramatically change the sound of the bass drum. Experiment to find the best sound for your drum and for the type of music you're playing.

To get good mic placement on a kick that has a full front head, have a friend play the drum softly. Get down on your hands and knees and listen to the sound near the front of the drum. As you move your head near different spots on the drum, the balance of frequencies will change. Find a spot that gives you a sound that you like. Place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your microphone at that spot, pointed directly at and close to—but not touching—the head. This method can yield a great tone, but it will be a little more difficult to isolate the signal, so be careful that you're not also grabbing too much of your bass player's amp.

It's a good idea to mount a bass drum mic using a short boom stand. A full-size microphone stand can get in the way, and it'll be a bit of an eyesore in front of your drumset. Some companies, like Randall May and Kelly Shu, offer internal microphone mounts that allow you to forgo a mic stand altogether. Whatever option you choose, make sure it includes at least a small amount of adjustability.

REINFORCING THE SNARE DRUM

The most popular snare microphone is the Shure SM57. You might also look into the Shure Beta 57A and SM98, Heil PR 20, and Sennheiser e604. For a good starting point, place the capsule of your mic two finger widths above the drum's rim, and aim it at the bottom of the rim on the opposite side of the drum (photo 4). Experiment with the position of the mic and listen to the differences in the sound. As you move the mic closer to the drum, you'll bring out more low frequencies. This is called proximity effect.

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Remember that a snare mic can pick up a lot of hi-hat signal. To minimize bleed, try to aim the back part of the mic (where the cable plugs in) toward the hi-hat.

Some drummers place a second microphone under the snare. You might want to skip this step when you play in clubs, since it's not crucial to establishing a good drum sound. Sure, a mic under the snare will add some "zip" from the snare wires, but if your snare is tuned well, you should be able to get a great sound with just one mic on top.

A TOUCH OF TOMS

To experiment with tom miking, use the same approach you did with the snare. If you like, you can place one mic between two toms to pick up the sound of both drums. This is a good option if you don't have enough mixer channels to mike each tom individually.

When miking toms, it's important that you don't introduce a lot of signal from the other instruments in your set. Great tom mics that have a fairly focused pickup pattern are the Shure SM57 and SM98 and the Sennheiser e604 and 421. In terms of mounting tom mics, you should consider clamping them directly to the drums' rims, which will keep your setup more streamlined. A disadvantage of this method is that clamping will choke some of the drums' resonance. And certain mics, like the Sennheiser 421, are simply too big to be mounted with clips, so you'll need to use boom stands.

I haven't mentioned hi-hat microphones because hats are often picked up by overheads and other mics on stage. For live performances, you'll need to add a hi-hat mic only when you're playing in a very large room.

This wraps up our basic discussion of microphones and mic placement. Next month we'll talk more about mixers and the other tools you'll need to create a great-sounding monitor system.

John Emrich is a professional drummer/producer based in the Washington, D.C., area. As a sound engineer, he has produced several expansion packs for FXpansion's software drum module BFD. He can be reached at johnemrich.com.

Louie Bellson

1924 - 2009

The music world has lost a true pioneer.

All of us at Alfred are deeply saddened by the passing of drumming legend, humanitarian and friend, Louie Bellson. Throughout his illustrious career, he played with virtually every giant in the music world and was a renowned composer, author, bandleader and educator. Alfred is proud to be the home of his many publications, some of which have now become classics. We are grateful for his talent, enthusiasm and creativity, and know his books and recordings will keep his spirit alive and continue to teach and inspire future generations of young musicians.

—Dave Black, and all of us at Alfred Music Publishing

Alfred

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He might not have inspired the cult of personality of a Gene Krupa, a Buddy Rich, or a Max Roach. But among his peers, no drummer had a more wide-ranging, long-lasting, or personal influence than

LOUIE BELLSON

July 6, 1924—February 14, 2009

He will be remembered for a lot of things, including phenomenal technique, solos that were constructed with compositional logic, pioneering use of double bass drums, indelible compositions, popular drum books, and informative and entertaining clinics. What many of us will miss most, though, is his smile, his warmth, and his enthusiasm for drumming and for life.

Louie Bellson received a wealth of honors and accolades during his long career, yet whenever I interviewed him for *MD*, it was difficult to get him to talk about himself. He always preferred to discuss the drummers who first inspired him—Jo Jones, Chick Webb, Big Sid Catlett, Baby Dodds, Dave Tough, and Gene Krupa—as well as contemporaries like Buddy Rich, Max Roach, Kenny Clarke, Elvin Jones, Roy Haynes, Shelly Manne, Joe Morello, and Mel Lewis. Louie was just as quick to cite the younger drummers he admired, and his conversation would be peppered with such names as Steve Gadd, Bobby Colomby, Danny Seraphine, Peter Erskine, Dennis Chambers, Neil Peart, Bill Bruford, Dave Weckl, and Vinnie Colaiuta. He befriended and encouraged numerous drummers, including a young Ron Spagnardi, who told Bellson of his dream to start a magazine called *Modern Drummer*.

by Rick Mattingly

Courtesy of Zildjian

Bellson, born in Rock Falls, Illinois, as Luigi Paulino Alfredo Francesco Antonio Balassoni, grew up with music all around him. His father ran a music store in Moline, Illinois, and Louie began learning to play drums at age three. Piano lessons followed. Young Louie also became an accomplished tap dancer, which led to his interest in using two bass drums. His drawing of a double bass kit earned him an A in a high school art class, but it was several years before he could persuade a manufacturer to build such a setup for him. Gretsch finally produced Bellson's first double bass drumset in the 1940s.

When he was sixteen, Bellson won Slingerland's national Gene Krupa drumming contest. By eighteen he was working with Ted Fio Rito and then with Benny Goodman. After serving time in the military, Louie rejoined Goodman's group and then played with Tommy Dorsey.

Although he had come up in the swing era, Bellson kept his ears open to new styles such as bebop. "I was with Tommy Dorsey from 1947 through 1950," Louie said, "and during that time bop was really at its strong point in New York. I tried to do a couple of things in Tommy's band that I saw [bop drumming architect] Kenny Clarke do, and the old man turned around and said, 'No bebop here.' Later on he got tuned in to it, but in the early days a lot of the bandleaders didn't understand what was going on."

In 1950 Louie co-led a septet with Charlie Shavers and then played briefly with Harry James before joining Duke Ellington's band in 1951, which became one of his most notable associations. In addition to playing drums with the Ellington Orchestra, Bellson contributed several compositions, including "The Hawk Talks" and the drum feature "Skin Deep."

After marrying singer Pearl Bailey in 1953, Bellson became her music director and drummer, a role he continued until Bailey's death in 1990. In between, he worked with Jazz At The Philharmonic, Norman Granz's famed concert series known for raising the profile of jazz among the general public and for featuring mixed-race lineups. In 1956 Bellson recorded *A Drum Is A Woman* with Ellington, and over the years he performed in several of Ellington's "sacred concerts." In 1955 and 1956, Bellson played with the Dorsey brothers (including on their TV show, where Elvis Presley made one of his first national television appearances). Louie subbed for Sonny Payne with Count Basie in 1962, and he continued to work with Goodman occasionally.

Bellson kept his ears open to many musical styles, which gave his drumming a great deal of variety and depth and allowed him to blend into a wide array of genres. "I've always tried to listen to different kinds of records," Louie said. "I took some lessons from Humberto Morales years ago, because

Alex Solca

Clockwise from top left: Louie swinging the Duke Ellington Orchestra in the1940s; a shot from his 2004 MD cover story; Louie's imagination inspired drum manufacturers to help bring his ideas for extended drumsets to fruition; with Benny Goodman and Carmen Miranda on the set of the 1943 Busby Berkeley film The Gang's All Here.

Innovator.
Composer.
Legend.
Friend.

Louie Bellson is a legend; he was a true innovator of drumming, an outstanding composer and arranger. He gave us a lifetime of music and endearing friendship that we will cherish forever. Our sympathy and love go out to the Bellson family. We will miss this True Gentleman.

From the Remo family.

REMO

MD has featured Louie Bellson on its cover three times. In the October/November 1980 issue, Louie discussed his fabled career, including his innovative double bass concepts and the function of the drummer within a big band. In January 1991, Louie (characteristically) chose to shine the light not on his own accomplishments but on the drummers he admired, from early jazz legends like Jo Jones to modern masters like Steve Gadd. And just five years ago, on the occasion of his eightieth birthday, Louie reflected on his historic recordings with the giants of jazz.

back then nobody really played Latin rhythms. We played cha-chas and rumbas, but not the way they should have been played. So I started taking lessons from Humberto, and after that Dizzy Gillespie showed me a lot of Afro-Cuban things. Then Stan Getz brought some people up from Brazil, and they started playing the bossa nova. Shelly Manne was the one who really hipped me to the bossa nova. You have to keep abreast."

Starting in 1967 Bellson led his own big band, which recorded frequently for the Pablo and Concord labels. He appeared on more than 200 albums with such world-renowned artists as Art Tatum, Oscar Peterson, Dizzy Gillespie, Ella Fitzgerald, Roy Eldridge, Benny Carter, Louis Armstrong, Stan Getz, and Joe Pass. And he wrote numerous compositions (including a jazz ballet called *The Marriage Vows*), authored several drum instruction books, was an active clinician, and served as a vice president at Remo.

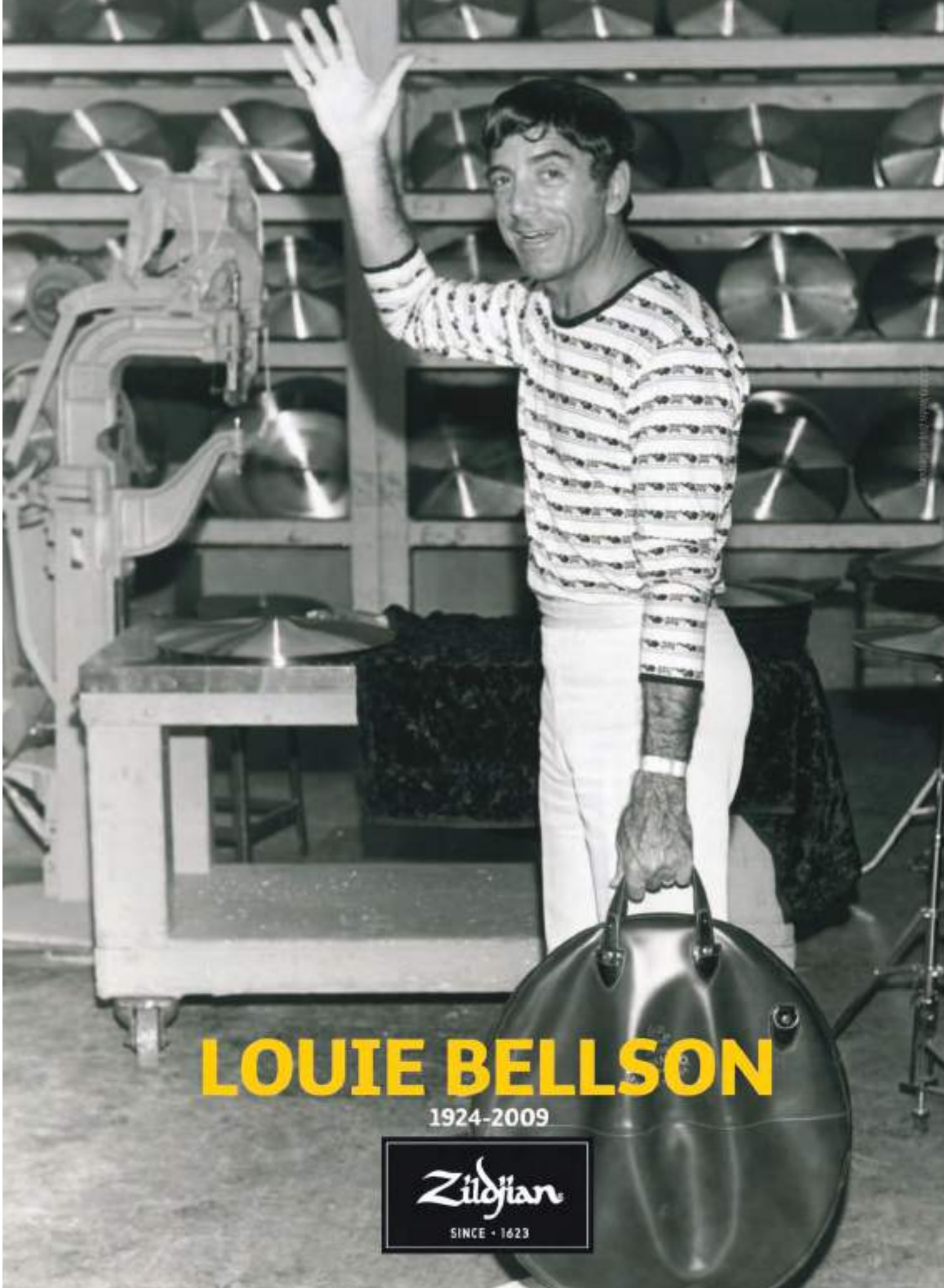
In 1978 Bellson was inducted into the Percussive Arts Society Hall Of Fame, and in 1985 he was voted into the *Modern Drummer* Hall Of Fame. In 1994 he received the American Jazz Masters Award from the National Endowment For The Arts, and in 1998 he was among the first group of drummers to receive the American Drummers Achievement Award from Zildjian. Louie earned four honorary doctorates, and in 2003 a historical marker was dedicated at the Illinois home where he was born. In 2007 he received the Living Jazz Legends award from the Kennedy Center For

Rick Malkin

The Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., and that same year he was added as a Living Legend to the ASCAP Jazz Wall Of Fame.

Even after suffering various health problems over the past few years, Bellson remained active. In 2006 he released the CD *The Sacred Music Of Louie Bellson And The Jazz Ballet*, which showcased his drumming and composing skills. And in 2008 Bellson and trumpeter Clark Terry released *Louie & Clark Expedition 2*.

Louie Bellson was a true gentleman whose career proved that nice guys *can* finish first.



LOUIE BELLSON

1924-2009

Zildjian

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Eric McPHERSON

A profound understanding of jazz is clearly in Eric McPherson's nature. And it most certainly was nurtured in him as well. Today the kid who tagged after Elvin, Roy, and Max is a bona fide jazz star in his own right.

Story by Ken Micallef
Photos by Paul La Raia

As a young musician growing up in the heart of New York City, Eric McPherson enjoyed an entree into the city's jazz world that gave him an insider's knowledge, one that could never be gleaned from a recording. Even before he picked up his first pair of sticks, he was attending gigs all over town with his mother, a professional dancer who worked the local circuit of clubs, concert halls, and theaters. In the '60s and early '70s, when dance, theater, and jazz crossed paths as equal elements of a sociopolitical aesthetic based in musical experimentation and a still-influential civil rights movement, Eric's mother often danced with jazz groups whose drummers were a "who's who" of legendary proportions.

Practically living at the famed NYC nightspot The Village Vanguard, McPherson and his buddy Nasheet Waits would hear Michael Carvin or Charles Moffett with Ornette Coleman one night and Elvin Jones or Nasheet's dad, Freddie Waits, with Richard Davis & Friends the next. It was a heady introduction to the music for young Eric, but really, he was just having fun.

"I remember the atmosphere," McPherson says from the Westbeth recording studio he shares with Nasheet Waits and tenor saxophonist Abraham Burton. "Roy Haynes would walk in and speak with everybody. There was a camaraderie that is missing today.

"Now I'm always looking for that," he continues. "Today it can be lonely on a hit—often there aren't many musicians there. Back then it was three sets every night and the clubs were open later. People were hanging out. I was just the kid in the corner who would set up Max Roach's drums. I got to know Elvin because he was playing with Richard Davis, who we always went to see. He asked me to play his drums once when I was still a little kid."

Fast-forward thirty years, and McPherson is a force to be reckoned with. His résumé includes a solo album, ***Continuum***, as well as recording credits with old masters Jackie McLean (during a fifteen-year tenure) and Andrew Hill, new-schoolers Jeremy Pelt, Avishai Cohen, Jason Lindner, and Steve Lehman, and a teaching practice at the University of Hartford. Taking what he describes as a textural approach regardless of any specific style, Eric brings experience to the stage that seems to go beyond his thirty-eight years.

McPherson's work with bassist Avishai Cohen is highly improvisational and semi-free, floating over Latin, Israeli, and funk rhythms. Even when playing what would typically be considered straight-ahead, Eric exhibits unbounded creativity, as on Andrew Hill's ***Time Lines*** and Jackie McLean's ***Rhythm Of The Earth***. And as part of a small cadre of forward-thinking drummers that includes Tyshawn Sorey and Greg Hutchinson, McPherson brings a nearly cubist approach to the progressive jazz of saxophonist Steve Lehman.

It all comes back to the legacy of Elvin, Max, and Freddie, and what they taught him about music and life. Truly an old soul, Eric McPherson channels the master drummers of his youth with a twenty-first-century zeal.

MD: You grew up surrounded by some of the greatest drummers of the era.
Eric: I owe it all to my mom. She danced with Cannonball Adderley's group, Tito Puente, and John Hendricks, and for Broadway shows. She knew all of those drummers before I was born. All of them were instrumental at different periods of my life.
MD: That's a lot of rhythm, internal and external.
Eric: Charles Moffett encouraged me to play the drums while he played the bass. I was three or four. He lent me a set of drums for a while. My mom introduced me to Michael Carvin when I was twelve, and I studied with him consistently for seven years, from '83 to '89. Michael is a force of nature. He has his opinions and he isn't afraid to share them. And growing up with Nasheet Waits, we went to school together. Back then everybody knew everybody; we would go to The Village Vanguard together when we were kids. That was like my living room. When I got older and became more serious, I would roadie for Max Roach, Michael Carvin, and Freddie Waits. Max even gave me a credit on one of his records, *To The Max,* as production engineer.

ERIC'S SETUP

Drums: 1960s Gretsch round badge
A. 6x14 Ludwig Black Beauty snare
B. 8x12 tom
C. 9x13 tom
D. 14x14 floor tom
E. 14x18 bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian
1. 14" K light hi-hats
2. 20" Crash Of Doom
3. 9½" Zil-Bel
4. 20" 1960s A with rivets
5. 16" EFX crash
6. 16" Spiral Trash

Sticks: Vic Firth sticks (5A) and brushes

MD: What did Michael Carvin focus on in your lessons?
Eric: His records *Antiquity* and *New York Calling* with Jackie McLean—those were my introduction to jazz. Then I saw Richard Davis & Friends with Freddie Waits, and the bug bit me. But Michael didn't dictate what he thought I should do. He helped me find who I was and then brought that out. We studied the rudiments, books by Charles Wilcoxon [*Modern Rudimental Swing Solos*], Ted Reed [*Syncopation*], and George Lawrence Stone [*Stick Control*]. His whole thing was to have some energy and spirit in what you're doing. Sometimes I would play with tenor saxophonist Abraham Burton in my lessons, and Michael would push us to stretch. Studying with him was about life lessons and the drums. Sometimes it was pleasant, sometimes he would get on me like a parent does.
MD: How did Carvin focus on your technique?
Eric: He would say, "Hold the stick how it's comfortable for you," for instance. Some people stress a certain way, but he never imposed anything. He talked

about the basics of the fulcrum and how you want it to be strong and firm but loose at the same time. Regarding time playing, he would tell me to check out certain players historically in the evolution of the instrument, but it wasn't specific, except to play with a certain conviction and spirit. When you're doing rudiments or the Jim Chapin book [*Advanced Techniques For The Modern Drummer*], there's a certain way it has to sound so it sounds like a melody. But he helps you find *you*.

MD: On several pieces you've recorded, such as "How Long" from Avishai Cohen's *Lyla*, you play very dense rimclick patterns. It almost sounds like drum 'n' bass—very active, measured, and funky.

Eric: Often I like to listen to what the song is and then provide something that will support the texture. I like to listen to different styles, not for the styles themselves necessarily, but to have the reference of a texture. I don't play drum 'n' bass, but I am familiar with the texture, which is really an extension of what James Brown did—which goes back to augmented second-line rhythms from New Orleans. I think texturally, and I don't like to box myself into the rules [of particular styles]. I am trying to support rather than impose.

MD: Did Avishai suggest anything?

Eric: Avishai never told me to play anything specific. And that was a working group; I'm more of a group-oriented musician, listening for the overall sound. That happens when you play with someone who is more established than you are: You have to give them what they need to make it work. In every situation I think, *What's happening here? What can I add to it to enhance it and support the group dynamic?* Then you can embellish it.

MD: You have a brief solo in "How Long" where you displace rhythms, the bass drum pattern in particular. How do you approach displacement?

Eric: I also solo in "The Evolving Etude" on that same album. But "How Long" is a three-measure phrase in four, and the first beat comes on the "&" of 1 as opposed to on 1. Five is in there as well, but you could play a backbeat through that entire phrase. Once you leave that and play off the accent, that really flips it.

MD: In "The Evolving Etude," are you thinking Latin, which is what the song suggests?

Eric: Not necessarily. I'm always thinking texturally. For me, a lot of music doesn't even have a drumset in it. Often I like to listen to real Afro-Cuban or Brazilian or Indian music, the real source, just to get an idea of where their attitude is rhythmically. Then I'll see how I can adapt that attitude to my instrument. That way I can approach the music from my point of view as opposed to a rule-book view. I might listen to some batucada music—as "roots" as you can get—listening to it without the filters of Western culture. Then I can get my own filtering process happening.

MD: On "Handsonit," also from Cohen's *Lyla*, if you played that for a dance musician he might think the rhythms were samples; it sounds cut up and edited with its hyper rim figures.

Eric: There is another drummer, Mark Guiliana, on there. He's playing an electronic instrument, triggering different effects. But I'm playing the acoustic drums. I was trying to support the sensi-

"MONEY IS NICE, AS IS FAME. BUT THE BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT IS HAVING AN IDENTIFIABLE VOICE."

bility of it and add a texture to let it be its own thing.

MD: But you'll play in a different bag with Jackie McLean than with Avishai Cohen. There has to be a source rhythm involved.

Eric: Only to the extent that a specific musical situation will call for that sensibility. Even with Jackie McLean, a lot of the music had a swing element, but it was also 6/8. Some tunes, like "Rhythm Of The Earth," were based on a hi-hat motif. He wanted to see what I would bring to the table.

MD: How would you contrast working with Steve Lehman to Avishai Cohen, or Andrew Hill to Jackie McLean, who might be more similar?

Eric: Actually, those last two were extremely different. With Andrew, he's not telling you what to do. You have to enhance it. There were no instructions.

MD: Didn't he expect you to play in a certain style?

Eric: Not at all. The way Andrew's music was moving wasn't based on time as we know it. It wasn't 1-2-3-4. It was evolving time. It was motion. He had the melodies, the progression, but how you'd get from A to B wasn't predetermined. A lot of people couldn't play with Andrew, for that reason. Some people need to know the bag, instead of taking it on themselves to put it where they think it should be. You have to be able to create on the spot. It's not about technique but rather how you can support what's happening. I'd never been in a situation like that, and it was very fun. We would just play. Questions would come up, like, "Is this free?"

MD: But Michael Carvin must have laid out certain ground rules, such as, "This is a brush pattern you would play on the snare drum," right?

Eric: No.

MD: Then how did you learn to play swing?

Eric: By listening.

MD: But you recognized it as swing.

Eric: I recognized it as the *possibility* of playing time that way. I never viewed it as a category. I learned by listening to records and going to hear people play live and emulating what they were doing. Michael did teach me a Latin rhythm, a guaguanco. That was the extent of it.

MD: And he must have showed you brush patterns.

Eric: We definitely studied different avenues of the instrument, but it wasn't always literal. I learned brushes from the Philly Joe Jones brush book [*Brush Artistry*, long out of print]. A lot of what I do is from listening and watching. If you grow up in the culture, then that's just part of who you are. If you're listening, you process the information so you can adapt when you come across certain rhythms or forms. There are so many ways you can play the same thing.

MD: You often sound like you're riding the rhythm, not literally playing the beat.

Eric: I am very much into elements, the building blocks. Everything can break down to the bare essentials. Once you understand those bare essentials, then you can build them into your own thing as opposed to whatever some entity tells you it's supposed to be. Money is nice, as is fame. But the *biggest* accomplishment is to have an individual, identifiable voice on the instrument.

MD: Can you offer tips for gaining independence on the drumset?

Eric: Listen and watch. Listen to capture what you hear, and watch to see how it's done live. You can see what somebody is doing, then you record it visually and audibly at the same time. Nowadays with YouTube you can see a lot of people. For those drummers we can't see live anymore, we can now see how they went about it.

That's one thing that is unique to jazz: It requires a certain technique and control to play the music. Every limb. If you're playing time, you have to keep the ride beat consistent, and the hi-hat, then all of a sudden you have this dialogue happening between the left hand and right foot. It's the music that requires the most sensitivity and discipline. A lot of it comes from Alan Dawson, like the things you can do with the *Syncopation* pages, keeping the ride cymbal pattern on all fours, and if you can feather the bass drum on all four beats while playing time, that develops serious independence and control. You've got to have patience and perseverance.

MD: As someone who grew up among the jazz elite, how would you suggest a newcomer break into the scene in New York City?

Eric: If you carry yourself a certain way and you have the drive and the right attitude, you are in there. I've seen a lot of ways that people go about getting gigs. Some people are bold, saying, "You need to put me on your gig!" and they show up with their sticks in their hand. That was never my way of going about it. Thelonious Monk said, "Never hound anybody for a gig." Just be around and be there, and the gig will come to you—if you are ready for it.

MD: Is being able to play the most important thing?

Eric: If you can play, that will crack anything. New York will build you up, if you have the drive and mentality to do it. That's why you have to come here at some point: to see what you're made of.

RECORDINGS

Abraham Burton & Eric McPherson Quartet Cause & Effect /// **Myron Walden** Like A Flower Seeking The Sun /// **Andrew Hill** Time Lines /// **Abraham Burton** The Magician /// **Avishai Cohen** Lyla ///**Jason Lindner Big Band** Live At The Jazz Gallery /// **Luis Perdomo** Awareness /// **Jimmy Greene** Brand New World /// **Steve Lehman** Artificial Light /// **Jeremy Pelt** Identity

FAVORITES

Jackie McLean & Michael Carvin Antiquity (Michael Carvin) /// **John Coltrane Quartet** A Love Supreme Live In Concert (Elvin Jones) /// **Ornette Coleman** The Shape Of Jazz To Come (Billy Higgins) /// **Miles Davis** Filles De Kilimanjaro (Tony Williams) /// **Max Roach, Art Blakey, Philly Joe Jones, Elvin Jones** The Big Beat (Max Roach, Art Blakey, Philly Joe Jones, Elvin Jones) /// **Max Roach** M'Boom (various) /// **Baby Dodds** Talking And Drum Solos (Baby Dodds) /// **Weather Report** Black Market (Chester Thompson, Narada Michael Walden) /// **Eric Dolphy** Outward Bound (Roy Haynes) /// **John Scofield** Still Warm (Omar Hakim)

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BENNY GREB

BREAKING DOWN THE LANGUAGE OF DRUMMING

by Michael Dawson

German drum star Benny Greb has a *lot* to talk about these days. Not only has he been steadily climbing the ranks as one of the world's premier clinicians—he's been a huge hit at major industry events including the Cape Breton and Montreal Drum Festivals, Meinl Drumfest, Australia's Ultimate Drummer's Weekend, and the prestigious Percussive Arts Society International Convention—but Benny's also kept himself extremely busy teaching, writing and producing his own music, doing sessions, and touring with various bands from Germany and Europe.

The twenty-eight-year-old drummer has been such a workaholic that he decided to put aside the first three months of 2009 for some personal time, which he spent hiking across the countryside of New Zealand with his girlfriend. "For the past eight years, I've had no more than three or four days off, so I'm squeezing in as much vacation as I can before getting back to nonstop work," Greb explained from a Southern California hotel the day before disappearing into the land of *The Lord Of The Rings*. When he returned home to Hamburg, Benny had very little time to reflect before hitting the road for a six-show tour with the funky guitar trio Jerobeam, a month-long excursion with the German singer-songwriter Stoppok, and a lengthy run of clinics and appearances promoting the release of his incredible two-disc instructional DVD, *The Language Of Drumming: A System For Musical Expression*.

In the beautifully produced *Language Of Drumming*, which was filmed in a variety of gorgeous locales from the Swiss Alps to a Bavarian forest, Greb outlines a systematic yet creative practice method that draws a direct correlation between the essential elements of drumming and the basics of spoken language. In the opening section, Benny explains a "rhythmic alphabet" that consists of all of the possible 16th-note and triplet subdivisions within one beat. The first lesson involves clapping each "letter" of this alphabet while singing a quarter-note pulse. The drummer then takes viewers down a clear path toward complete musical fluency by demonstrating how rudiments and various stickings can be applied to these letters in order to form "words" and "phrases." Disc one concludes with a captivating discussion/demonstration (in the Syntax chapter) that shows ways to use the basic vocabulary in odd-note groupings to create more advanced, tension-filled phrases.

The second DVD puts technique aside and focuses on creativity and musicianship. Here Greb offers logical exercises for practicing improvisation, as well as demo segments on ways to explore different drum sounds and specific systems for developing a strong sense of time. Benny closes his three-hour lesson with an incredible open solo that perfectly illustrates how stunning displays of technique can be simultaneously musical, tasteful, and emotionally thrilling.

The night before he left for his three-month sabbatical, Benny sat down with us for an hour so we could dig a little deeper into some of the fresh drumming concepts he presents in his DVD.

Matthias Kelz

THE LANGUAGE EXPANDED

MD: When did you start working on *The Language Of Drumming*?

Benny: I started preparing the DVD about three years ago. The material is a combination of things I've come up with over the past ten years mixed with great systems that I picked up along the way.

MD: What inspired the idea of breaking down drumming in a way that's similar to how we learn to speak languages?

Benny: Early in my career, I would get frustrated because I wasn't able to express myself the way I wanted. I didn't want to play one-bar fills *exactly* the way I prepared them each time. Playing that way is similar to what happens when you use one of those cheap foreign language books to learn basic sayings. You learn something like, "Can you tell me the way to the train station, please?" But you don't *really* know what you're saying. If the other person doesn't answer you like it said they would in the book, the conversation can't go any further. Many drum instructional books and DVDs function that same way. They try to give you licks that always fit, like, "Play this fill for a Latin song," or "Here's *the* rock groove."

In real life, you have to bring much deeper knowledge, experience, and sensitivity to every situation. So I developed a system that's like learning a language—in terms of defining letters, words, grammar, and syntax—so I could express myself freely on the drums. It's similar to what happens when I say the word *say*. I don't need to think *s-a-y*. I just feel the word and say it. I'm using letters to create words that express an emotion. I wanted to develop a similar emotional connection in my drumming.

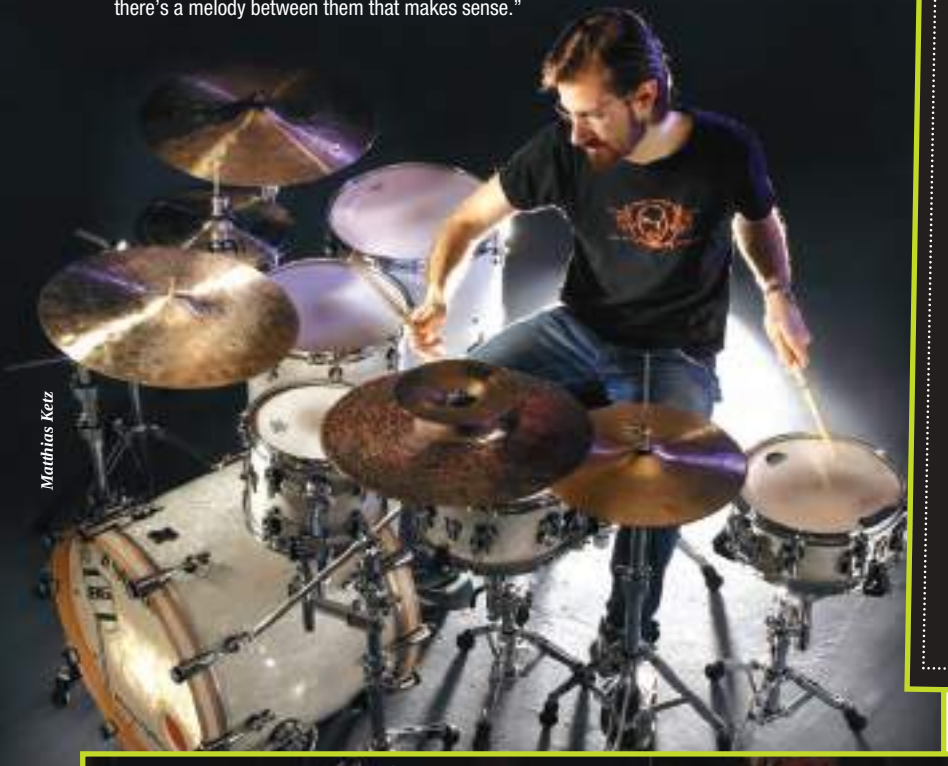
"THERE IS NO IDEAL DRUM SOUND…

…only suitable sounds for specific situations. Some people have this thing about letting a tom ring for as long as it can with no muffling. That's one sound, but in some cases it's not right for the song. You have to learn about all the possibilities and how to change from one to the other very fast.

"I've learned that it's important to tune drums not so that they feel great to play, but that they *sound* great. On my solo kit, the floor toms are really low—the 16" is almost dead—and the snare is muddy and deep sounding. This gives me a lot of bass and punch, but with enough tone so that I can play melodies.

"The bass drum tuning really depends on the room. I'm sometimes surprised by how tightly I tune it in the studio and still get a deep and full sound. But I usually start with the heads almost as low as they get, and then I'll tighten a couple screws one or two turns.

"With the toms, the bottom head is a little bit higher than the top. I try to get a full range of tuning, so the 16" floor tom is as deep as I can make it and the 10" is as high as it can go while still sounding deeper than the snare drum. You have to balance the toms and snare a little bit so that there's a melody between them that makes sense."



Mathias Ketz

BENNY'S SOLO KIT

Drums: Sonor SQ2 Vintage Beech in white pearl finish
A. 18x22 bass drum
B. 5x12 snare
C. 6½x13 snare
D. 8x10 tom
E. 14x14 floor tom
F. 16x16 floor tom

Cymbals: Meinl
1. 14" Byzance extra dry hi-hats
2. 18" Byzance extra dry crash
3. 8" Byzance traditional thin splash
4. 20" prototype ride
5. 12"/14" Generation X Trash hats
6. 22" Byzance extra thin jazz ride (used as crash)
7. 18" Byzance extra thin jazz crash (not in photo)

Hardware: Sonor 600 series stands and Giant Step pedals

Heads: Remo coated Emperors on tops of toms, coated Ambassadors on bottoms, coated Ambassadors on snares, clear Powerstroke 3 on bass drum batter, custom front head by Drumsigns.com

Percussion: Meinl bongos, cowbells, and shakers

Sticks: Pro-Mark 5BG (Benny Greb signature)

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After all, music *is* a language. It can make you laugh, it can make you sad, or it can make you dance. And the drum was one of the earliest tools used for communication, so it made sense to me to think of it this way—it makes everything so much easier.

Heinz Kronberger

RECORDINGS

Jerobeam How One Becomes What One Is, Confidential Breakfast /// **Stoppok** Sensationsstrom /// **Ron Spielman Trio** Absolutely Live /// **Strom & Wasser** Farbengeil, Gossenhauer, Spielt Keine Rolle /// **Benny Greb** Grebfruit, Brass Band (summer '09)

FAVORITES

The Beatles Revolver (Ringo Starr) /// **Chick Corea** Children's Songs (no drums) /// **John Mayer Trio** Try! (Steve Jordan) /// **Glenn Gould** Bach: The Goldberg Variations (no drums) /// **Kraftwerk** The Man-Machine (Ralf Hütter, Florian Schneider) /// **The Police** Reggatta De Blanc (Stewart Copeland) /// **Aphex Twin** Drukqs (programmed) /// **Oscar Peterson Trio** We Get Requests (Ed Thigpen) /// **Tower Of Power** Soul Vaccination: Live (David Garibaldi)

MD: The practice process you outline on the first disc of *The Language Of Drumming* is precisely organized and structured. Was there ever a point where your playing sounded systematic?

Benny: It was the opposite. My playing sounded a little stiff when I tried to transcribe what other guys played, or when I thought, *This is a Latin beat*, or *This song is jazz, so I should play the standard jazz thing to it*. You have to spend some time learning all of the letters [basic rhythms], which requires some thinking and analyzing in order to gain the vocabulary. But once you learn them, you can forget about how you form the words and just use them to express ideas. You're able to just play and react to the phrases that you're hearing because you've practiced every possible combination. My system also involves improvisation exercises that help you focus less on what you play and more on *how* you play it.

MD: Would you suggest that someone working with your DVD practice the technique exercises from disc one and the improvising methods on disc two at the

same time?

Benny: Yes, because you can practice the improvisation exercises regardless of your skill level. If you can only play quarter notes, you can still make some music. Just play quarter notes around your kit and explore different ways to phrase them. The difficulty level of the improvising exercises is based on which rhythms you decide to use.

MD: How have you incorporated these systems into your practicing?

Benny: I've kept a practice diary for eight or ten years, so I know exactly what I've practiced on which day, at what tempo, for how long, and how much I liked it. I go back to my diary to find out what sounded good, as well as what I can improve on. I always try to do equal amounts of practicing and playing. So if I have three hours to spend behind the drums, I try to do one and a half hours of practicing and one and a half hours of playing.

MD: What's the difference between practicing and playing?

Benny: Practicing is the process of figuring out new things and gaining abilities that you didn't have before. Playing is just playing, improvising, and grooving along to CDs. As soon as you try to figure out a fill that a drummer played on a CD, then you've moved into practicing. But playing is really important because that's what it's all about. If you practice and search only for what you can do better, then your performances become stiff. You have to leave some time to play and let the music flow automatically.

MD: Are the improvisation exercises on your DVD considered practicing or playing?

Benny: They're more playing, because you're not thinking about *what* you play as much. But you still have to control what you play. It's like having a relaxed conversation but still being aware of what you say. The opposite would be that you're not able to control what comes out of your mouth. That's never a good way to communicate. I try to use that principle when I play. I'm always very focused and I always try to perform the best that I can, even in rehearsal.

MD: Have you tried extending the letter, word, and syntax systems to groupings like fives, sevens, and nines rather than just fours and threes?

Benny: Yes. I had a crazy time where I practiced Frank Zappa's "Black Page" and played in a Zappa project with a big orchestra in Germany. But there's a tendency for some drummers—especially young ones—to work on advanced things like quintuplets and sextuplets before covering the basics. All great drummers have one thing in common, though: They can do simple things r*eally* well. So I wanted to focus on ideas that are useful and can be applied in many different musical situations.

MD: One thing I'm having trouble with is clapping the alphabet at faster tempos and making sure I'm perfectly accurate. How do you suggest I develop that?

Benny: You have to zoom in and practice the letters slowly at first so you can clap the rhythm exactly in time with the subdivisions. Those figures have to become subconscious so that you know exactly where the clap has to go, even when you stop counting the subdivisions. It becomes more of a feeling than a math equation. Once you've played it enough, it gets saved in your

emotions and you can trigger it like *that*. [snaps fingers]

PRACTICING PRECISION

MD: Your phrasing is always very precise, even when you're improvising. How do you maintain that level of focus and control?

Benny: I always fight to keep myself disciplined. I have to be sure that when I get on the set I don't just doodle around and improvise. I have to *practice* first. If I start by playing freely, I have so much fun. But when I'm done I just want to go home. There's a saying that time-management professionals use: "If you have to eat a frog, don't look at it too long. And if you have to eat three frogs, eat the biggest one first." [laughs]

MD: What is the "big frog" for you these days?

Benny: A big frog for me is being able to play a groove to a click without any variations for ten minutes or more. It's a mental exercise that's almost like meditation. I just turn on the click and play a groove as well and spot-on as I can and get into the zone. I don't want my mind dreaming away; I want to focus on what I'm playing. So focus and concentration are big frogs for me because it's very difficult to play something with full concentration where I'm thinking about different parameters like dynamics, sound quality, how my hands feel, and how I'm breathing.

BUILDING DYNAMICS

MD: You play with a lot of dynamics, even within basic grooves and fills. Do you consciously think about shaping phrases all the time?

Benny: I love internal dynamics. It goes back to the idea of concentrating on the *how* of what I play. Within that, there's so much to practice. I used to think, *I have to play a fancy hi-hat thing here.* But now I think more like, *Okay, that's the drum groove. It's quite standard, but HOW should I play it?* As soon as you start thinking like that, hundreds of possibilities become available. The most obvious but useful thing to do is explore dynamics.

MD: What would you suggest to a young drummer who plays with little control of dynamics?

Benny: Think about the instrument. The drumset consists of wooden shells with thin plastic drumheads plus some metal plates, which we hit with sticks. Doesn't it make sense to hit the metal plates with less power than you use to hit the plastic drumheads? I learned this from watching Steve Gadd. When he does a tom fill, he plays with a lot of power. But when he ends the fill with a crash, he doesn't hit the cymbal as hard as he hit the lowest tom. A lot of times when people talk about technique, they only mention the obvious things like speed, or crazy independence. But having a good sound and good internal dynamics is a technique too.

Also, if the balance of the kit is off, like if the bass drum isn't loud enough compared to the snare or hi-hat, some drummers tend to think, *I've got to hit the bass drum harder*. But why not play the hi-hat and snare softer? Or if you don't have enough distinction between your backbeats and soft ghost notes, don't hit the backbeats louder; play the ghost notes *softer*.

SOLO STRUCTURES

MD: How do you approach structuring a drum solo?

Benny: I like to have a framework of where I want to start, how I want to end, and different stations that I want to go to in the middle. Sometimes I leave out a station here or there if it doesn't feel right that day, and I'll improvise between each section. I try to get freer with my framework each year, and there have been shows where I've tried to have no preferences at all. But even if you don't want to have any preferences, there are always things that you come back to. I was fighting that for a while. I tried to have a jazz approach of always expressing myself and not playing anything prepared. But I've relaxed on that a little bit, since I realized that I have some grooves and melodies that I love to play.

I often start a drum solo by playing very little—maybe using a small group of instruments or playing very slowly—so that I have ground to build upon. One signature thing I do is this double bass samba figure with two hi-hats and a melody. I get the samba pattern going with the feet, and then I play the basic melody with the right hand. Once that's established, the left hand plays solo ideas and adds a backbeat. I enjoy doing that at the end of my solo, because it's very high energy. But if I play the samba in the middle, I'll break it down so I can build up something else. So basically I have a few set things that I want to play, then I try to make it musical by using contrasting parts, dynamics, different styles, and other things. It's not witchcraft. Bach explored these concepts a long time ago.

MD: Do you have any parting words of advice?

Benny: Buy my DVD! [laughs] I would just like to say that it's important to know the tradition and try to be creative at the same time. That's the biggest thing: Know what came before *and* create the future.

Heinz Kronberger

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Story by Patrick Berkery • Photos by Rob Shanahan

The Return Of The Mac Daddy

MICK FLEETWOOD

Several decades after driving Fleetwood Mac to the top of Swinging London's star-studded blues revival scene—and subsequently helping reinvent the band as the biggest pop phenomenon of the '70s—Mick Fleetwood is still keeping time like only he can.

"Mick Fleetwood could hypnotize me with a bass drum and a cowbell."

—Stan Lynch, *Modern Drummer*, May 2008

For proof of what former Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers drummer Stan Lynch is referring to, listen to Fleetwood Mac's "Gold Dust Woman," the spooky closing track on their landmark 1977 album, *Rumours*.

Beneath Stevie Nicks' witchy purr and Lindsey Buckingham's diffuse electric guitar squalls and piercing slide work, Fleetwood anchors the track's mix of drama and drone with a sparse bass drum and cowbell part that is indeed hypnotizing: boom-TOCK, boom-TOCK, boom-TOCK, boom-TOCK.

Fleetwood is held in high regard as a drummer for outfitting his band's songs with similarly hypnotic grooves in various forms. Think of the hollowed-out verses of "The Chain," the delicate brushwork of "Sara," and the steady pulse of "Dreams." When the chorus of "Gold Dust Woman" enters, however, the other side of Fleetwood's rhythmic genius is on display: his penchant for playing patterns of accents where you least expect them, and rarely duplicating those figures when a section repeats.

Mick says that habit developed from a difficulty in consistently committing things to memory. And he's well aware that other drummers have driven themselves mad trying to approximate his unorthodox style. "Some of the drummers that play with Stevie when she goes out on her own, they'll say, 'When I play your parts, it just sounds so stiff and weird. It's driving me crazy,'" Fleetwood says with a knowing laugh. "I tell them it was just the way I felt it and I can't really explain it. With me, it's back-to-front sometimes."

While he's celebrated by fans and fellow musicians for providing such unique rhythmic counterpoint to the gilded pop songs of Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks, within the ranks, Fleetwood, sixty-one, has always been much more than just the band's drummer, or founding father, or partial namesake.

From Fleetwood Mac's inception as a blues-based London combo back in 1967, Mick has been the straw that stirs the drink. He acted as de facto road manager in the early days, drafted new members as original guitarist-vocalist Peter Green and replacements like Bob Welch left the fold, managed the band's affairs when things blew up in the '70s, and kept his group afloat in the '80s and '90s after Buckingham and Nicks temporarily departed.

Throughout it all, Fleetwood has had bassist John McVie (the "Mac" in Fleetwood Mac) at his side to form one of the greatest rhythm sections in rock history. And well into his fifth decade as a working drummer, he's feeding his desire to have a regular gig with two bands he formed with former Mac guitarist-vocalist Rick Vito—The Mick Fleetwood Blues Band and The Island Rumours Band.

Today, the Mac is back (albeit minus retired keyboardist-vocalist Christine McVie) and is well into a reunion tour that should keep the band on the road throughout 2009 and might inspire the members to enter the studio in the not-too-distant future. "I truly believe that during this tour Stevie and Lindsey will be thinking of ideas for a new Mac record," Fleetwood says with palpable enthusiasm. "This band feels we're more than capable of doing that. If I was put on the spot and asked to bet on whether it would happen, I would put money on this band definitely recording again."

Zildjian
Avedis
Zildjian

MD: When you wrapped the last tour in 2004, was there any certainty that Fleetwood Mac would work together again?
Mick: There was, it was just a question of when. In truth, we thought we'd have been doing this three years ago. But it had to be right for everyone. Otherwise it would just suffocate something that someone's doing. Lindsey's solo projects took way longer than he thought. And Stevie went back out on the road, so we waited. Everyone is totally focused instead of sort of focused. So it's worked out better.
MD: Is there a conditioning regimen you now go through prior to a tour?
Mick: More in the past, really. I stay reasonably fit these days. And I play quite a bit at home in Hawaii with The Island Rumours Band. Prior to rehearsals for the Fleetwood Mac tour, I was in Europe with The Mick Fleetwood Blues Band. We did a grueling five-week tour, a helluva lot of fun. We were playing five, six nights a week, so coming into Fleetwood Mac again, my muscle memory was pretty locked in.
MD: Does having two bands going while Fleetwood Mac is inactive keep you as busy as you'd like?
Mick: Yes. And while I'm off with Fleetwood Mac, both units are active with another drummer in my place. The Island Rumours Band does a lot of corporate gigs in Hawaii. We play a mix of traditional Hawaiian styles and a good cross-section of older Fleetwood Mac stuff, re-approached. And John McVie sits in from time to time. I wanted to keep active musically, and the best way to do that is to put something together that has a real purpose to it. Going around and jamming and stuff is great—and I do a fair amount of that on the island, to keep my chops up. But inherently I'm a band creator. I always seem to end up forming bands. [laughs]
MD: It also seems like a good way to stay connected to Fleetwood Mac's roots as a blues-based band.
Mick: Definitely. On this last Blues Band tour, we obviously played a lot of the old Fleetwood Mac stuff from the Peter Green days. And having done that in a focused way, I wondered for the life of me why I hadn't done it before. Now in downtime from Fleetwood Mac, we can go play blues festivals, just generally plug into that music I was weaned on. I love playing it. We're even doing "Oh Well" in the show with Lindsey. I'm very happy about that. A little slice of where the band originally came from. And it's been kicking ass.
MD: What are some of your recollections of the early days gigging around London?
Mick: My first official gig in London was with a band called The Senders. They were basically an all-instrumental group. And out of that band came The Shames, which did fairly well around London. We played at The Marquee, doing Yardbirds-esque stuff. From there came my connection with keyboardist Peter Bardens, who I played with for many, many years. I went on to play

"I don't think I would make a good full-time session drummer. I'd bankrupt people, chewing up time with suggestions."

MICK'S SETUP

Drums: DW (combination of VLT and VLX Finish Ply shells in "broken glass glitter" with gold hardware)
A. 7x14 snare
B. 11x14 tom
C. 10x13 tom
D. 14x16 floor tom
E. 16x18 floor tom
F. 16x23 bass drum

Hardware: DW 5000AD3 bass pedal, DW 5500TD two-leg hi-hat stand

Cymbals: Zildjian
1. 20" K crash-ride with rivets (brilliant finish)
2. 22" A Custom ride
3. 15" hi-hats (New Beat top/Mastersound bottom)
4. 17" A Custom crash
5. 18" K Custom Session crash
6. 22" K ride (brilliant finish)
7. 22" K Constantinople medium low ride
8. 18" Oriental crash

Electronics: Roland PD-8 trigger pads

with him and Rod Stewart in Shotgun Express, and with all sorts of people. I was very fortunate that once I got to London I was never without a gig. I never had any downtime when I wasn't playing. That situation really helped my chops.

MD: Did you have lessons or any kind of training before you started gigging?

Mick: No, it was training on the job. Though I was playing to records in the attic when I was a young kid, about nine or ten. I had a toy kit called a Gigster. Each drum was about 6" deep, and it had a 6" cymbal, a hi-hat, and a bass drum.

MD: When you were playing around London in the mid-'60s, were you rubbing elbows with up-and-coming drummers like Ginger Baker?

Mick: I didn't really know anyone, but I very quickly knew of them. They were all drummers that commanded a lot of reverence, like Ginger, and Phil Seamen, who used to play with Georgie Fame. He was a great English jazz drummer. Ginger used to worship him. And I first knew of Ginger from playing with the Graham Bond Organisation—that was a wild band. And Mickey Waller [Jeff Beck, Rod Stewart, Brian Auger, John Mayall] I really admired. Great feel drummer, one of the dudes. He was like the English Jim Keltner—played with a lot of people, but he still retained his own style.

MD: When did you hook up with John McVie?

Mick: I hooked up with John playing-wise with John Mayall's Bluesbreakers. I knew him as a sort of wayward friend. We'd played on so many gigs in and around London, at places like The Flamingo and The Marquee. When I hooked up with Mayall it was John Mayall, Peter Green, John McVie, and me. So unknowingly, the first three members of Fleetwood Mac were in that band.

MD: I would imagine you and John could roll out of bed in the middle of the night after not having played together in a decade and fall into that boom-bap/boom-boom-bap groove without a problem.

Mick: You are entirely correct. [laughs] We all don't see that much of each other when we're apart—John and Lindsey had probably seen each other three times in five years. And Lindsey, bless his heart, like the second week of rehearsals, literally, he had tears in his eyes, saying, 'Shit, I forgot about you guys.' He was saying, 'I *get* what we have in this band.' No matter the blows that come and go personally, musically, when we're all together, it's for sure a trip.

MD: You also have a tight rhythmic link with Lindsey that feels a little more primal than the way you lock in with John's bass. The way you and Lindsey often jam into "Go Your Own Way" live is a good example of that.

Mick: You're right. I play very physically. And when Lindsey's on stage he's also pretty physical, in terms of how he gets his stuff over. We have that sort of camaraderie. He knows he can turn

GOING HIS OWN WAY: Mick's Lists

RECORDINGS

Mick's favorites of the tracks he's recorded with Fleetwood Mac: "Albatross" (English Rose) /// "Black Magic Woman" (English Rose) /// "Go Your Own Way" (Rumours) /// "Rattlesnake Shake" (Then Play On) /// "Oh Daddy" (Rumours)

INFLUENCES

B.B. King Live At The Regal (Sonny Freeman) ///
Sandy Nelson Let There Be Drums (Sandy Nelson) ///
The Rolling Stones Exile On Main Street (Charlie Watts) ///
George Harrison All Things Must Pass (Alan White, Ringo Starr, Jim Gordon, Ginger Baker)

around to me and he's going to get his ass kicked. And he can do likewise with me. That's how we communicate musically. With John, I don't have to think about what he's playing, and he doesn't think about me. We're so blended into one, it's second nature. I can go off and have fun and play off Lindsey, and John's always right there with us.

MD: It's certainly an interesting contrast of styles. There's Lindsey, who's more of an eccentric, studio-rat perfectionist type. And there's John and you, who bring an old-school blues approach to the table. On paper, you wouldn't think that mix would work, but it does.

Mick: John and I deliver something that may not be everybody's cup of tea, but generally—which is a nice thing—people acknowledge that it's a rhythm section that is very identifiable. I'm only saying that because I've heard it so often. For Lindsey, when he's away from that, playing with other players who do their thing and approach things differently, it takes a few days for him to come around. I could see it on his face when we started rehearsals. We were doing some of our songs that he had been doing on his solo tours, and I could see him thinking, *That ain't gonna work with these two….* [laughs] But slowly, the big smile would come, and he'd realize that's the stuff that Fleetwood Mac does.

John and I play like blues players, really, in terms of the way we approach things. It's not the material we're doing. But the approach John and I have was learned in the trenches playing with Sonny Boy Williamson. It stays with you. I'm not Gene Krupa. When all is said and done I'm just a guy who gets out his own emotions through a pretty simple formula of technique. I pride myself on time and I pride myself on knowing that if something is digging a hole or not swinging, I'm not playing well. It's that simple. Has it got the grease? If not, give me a can of it, and let's deliver this shit—properly.

MD: Another interesting contrast can be heard on the recordings. It's well documented how the band would work tirelessly in the studio on tightening arrangements, getting sounds, and perfecting harmonies. Yet a lot of the drum parts seem pretty loosely played—you'll fill through the tops of measures, you won't repeat parts from verse to verse or chorus to chorus. That's really become your trademark.

Mick: Some parts definitely don't repeat, that's for sure. [laughs] It's only because I have no idea what I'm doing.

MD: In the past you've discussed how, as a young man, having difficulty committing things to memory led to your somewhat nonlinear drumming style.

Mick: Yes, and I'll take it willingly. A lot of these songs, no matter how simple they are, would get played differently by me each time. They still do. You're right, that has become part of my thing. John has become a master at catching my mix-ups: "Whoops, there he goes." [laughs] That's another thing that makes John's relationship with me so special. He covers my ass. We'll play a lot of stuff separately. In doing it that way, he so perfectly places a part in impromptu stuff that I do. It becomes seamless, and

it becomes part of, quote, the style. And then you're off to the races.

MD: During the recording process, has a producer or anyone in the band tried to get you to focus on repeating parts and playing more static arrangements?

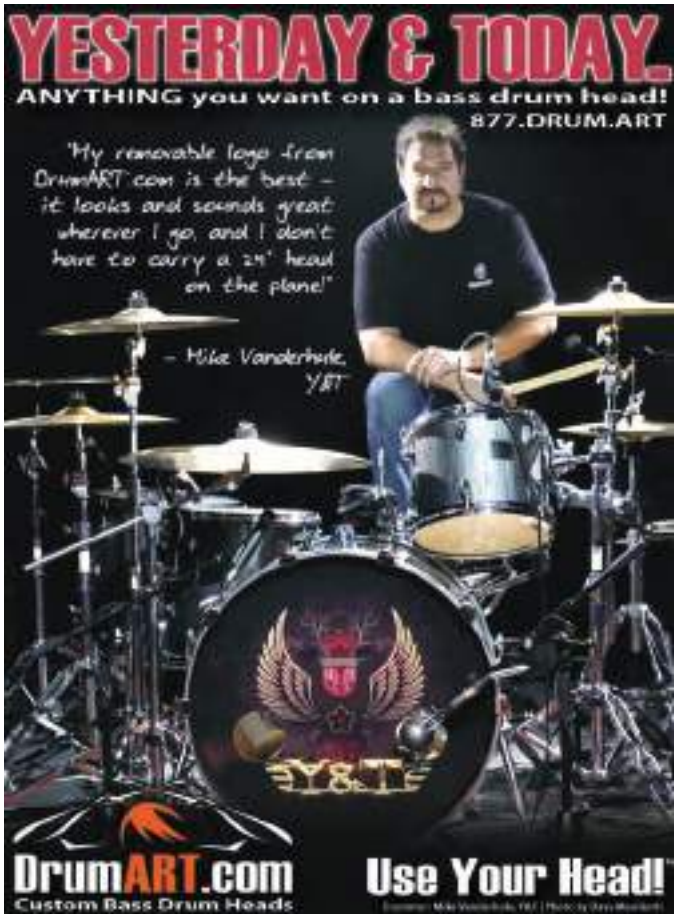
Mick: Yeah, for about two minutes. [laughs] Then they realized that I was having a mental breakdown. Lindsey was familiar with [early Fleetwood Mac] albums like *Then Play On*. He loved that album. He had heard these somewhat complicated things that I played, and at the onset of joining Fleetwood Mac he would say, "You must be able to do that." He would come in with demos of songs, which was totally fine. I would get as close as I could get to the drum part. And early on he would go, "No, no, we've got to do it like *this*." I'd say, "I'll really try and do it, but I'll probably mess it up, and we'll spend three months in the studio doing it." He very quickly realized that John and I listen, and we really try to deliver to your front line what they really want—as a rhythm section should.

MD: So in something like "Dreams," for instance, where the chorus makes that

elegant entrance and you answer that by crashing the cymbal on the first downbeat, that's just how you felt it?

Mick: I'm playing it as I feel it. And a lot of the things that stayed there over the years have been repeated because that's where I feel it should be. I've had incredible drummers ask me, "What is that thing you do on 'Go Your Own Way'?" It was just the way I felt it. I'm a big believer in listening to the lead guitar and, more importantly, the lead vocal—where the singers are dropping their phrasing. This comes from my training as a blues player. In blues, for the most part, really all you have is the timing around the vocalists, and the timing where you complement their phrasing. The other part of the equation is just how loud or how soft you play.

MD: You mention "Go Your Own Way," and that's a fascinating drum track for what you *don't* do in some spots, and what the listener thinks is going on. Like the chorus that comes back in after the guitar solo—you fill up to it, but



there's no cymbal crash. There's also the way the shakers are pushing time in the chorus, making it seem like you're playing a four-on-the-floor thing, but you're not. And you can't really find the 1 when Lindsey brings that acoustic part in at the top—it's pretty maddening!

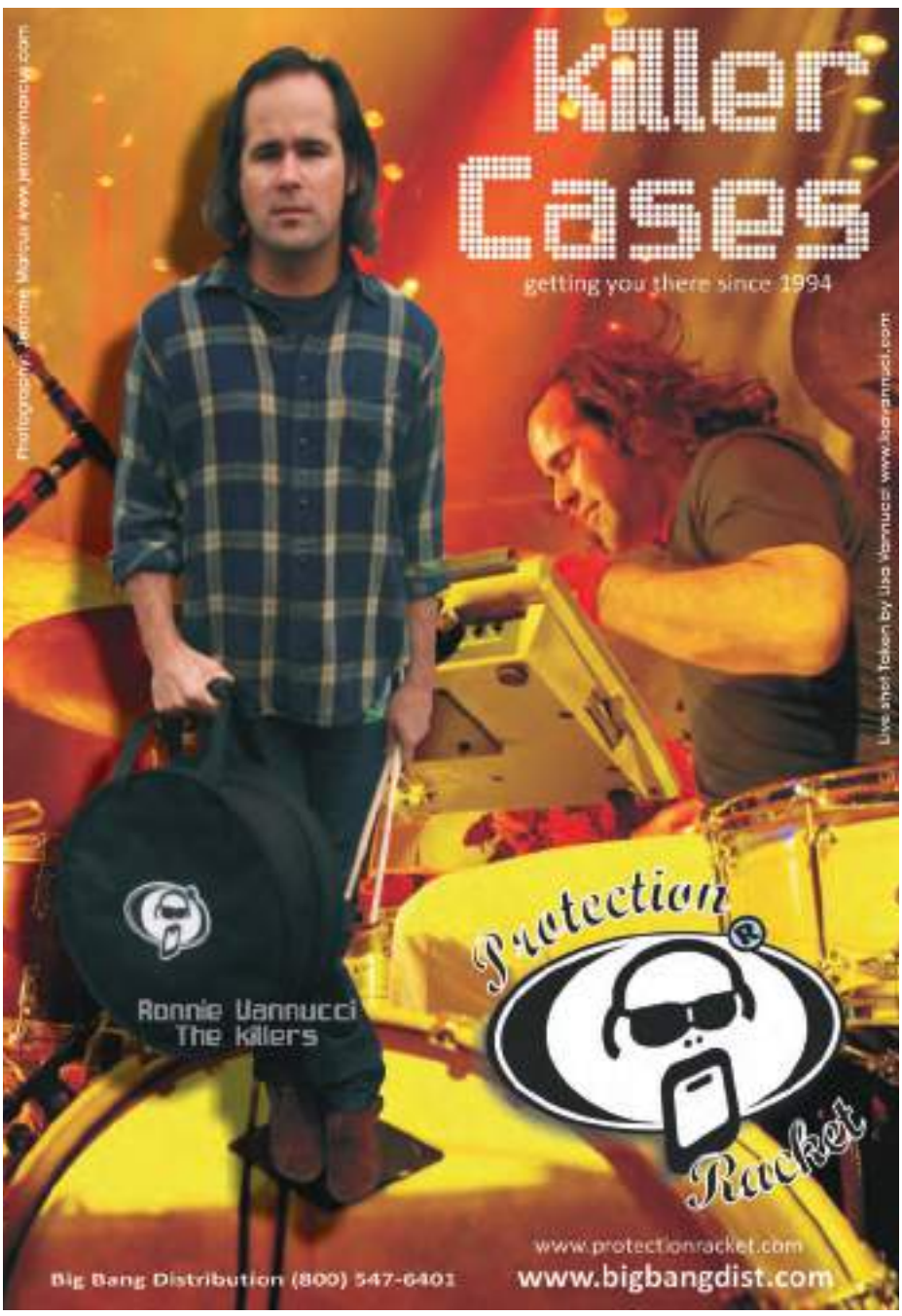
Mick: I've gathered that's an interesting track from people's reactions over the years. [laughs] When Jeff Porcaro was playing with Boz Scaggs, we used to tour a lot together. He would stand beside the stage almost every night, but we didn't really talk that much at first. Then a few weeks later, he grabs me after soundcheck one night and says, "All right, I'm going out of my mind every night trying to figure out what you're doing on 'Go Your Own Way.'" And he was a true craftsman with a great feel. Technically, he was very astute. I would watch him be quietly intimidated, really. And I felt so awful, because I couldn't actually explain my part. I said, "You may not want to hear this, but I don't really know what I do." I didn't know how to dissect those figures, to tell him what I was doing. I told him he'd have to figure it out himself, just watching me every night. And then, just when he thought he'd found out what I was doing, he realized it was slightly different every night. I had him bedazzled by stuff that, in truth, is so incredibly simple. People often think it's more complicated than it really is.

MD: It kind of all comes back to your approach being informed by that difficulty in committing things to memory.

Mick: I think that over the years, my thing—call it lazy mind, or whatever—it did become part of my style. In the early days, there's no doubt that some of the things I would do would, in essence, get me into trouble. I was hanging on by the skin of my teeth half the time. Then I figured out how to get in and out of these funny, simple time zones. It could've been catastrophic, but it became something I was very comfortable with. It's like committing a crime and getting away with it. Now I just do it without any discomfort, and it's become part of the plot. When I do session stuff—which is very rare, because you have to deliver certain things—I always say, "I'd love to come and play, but I just want you to know, I'll do what I do. And if it's good, great. Or you can take it in and chop it up and do what you want with it."

MD: Listening to some other artists' records you've played on, like Matthew Sweet's *Altered Beast* album and Warren Zevon's "Werewolves Of London," it seems pretty clear from what you play that you were brought in to "be Mick Fleetwood," so to speak.

Mick: Yeah, I think that's safe to say. [laughs] "Werewolves" is just John and me doing our rhythm section thing. And I did a session for Dido's most recent album [*Safe Trip Home*]. Dido and her producer, Jon Brion, had been sitting around listening to Fleetwood Mac and they said, "Let's get Mick down." Little did she know I was a huge fan of hers. They ended up cutting up bits and pieces of what I played. But I had a lot of fun doing that. Though again, I don't think I would make a good full-time



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session drummer. I'd bankrupt people, chewing up time with suggestions: "Let's do this, let's do that…." [laughs] A session guy comes in, does his thing, and leaves. I get too interested in how to go about it, or finding ways to go about something that I couldn't do. It becomes something else, and everyone else gets sucked into my process. It's still a thrill to be asked.

MD: In a conceptual sense, *Tusk* was someone else's album—Lindsey's. It's viewed as his "weird" anti–*Rumours II* brainchild or something. But it doesn't seem to be *that* much of an odd record once you get past the presentation of the drums—both the sounds and the performances. What are your thoughts on the record thirty years on?

Mick: *Tusk* is my favorite album. And the whole making of that record wasn't that strange to me, because if you go back to "Oh Well" and some things on *Then Play On*, Peter Green was playing timpani and having fun with drums and percussion. Lindsey's choice of odd drum sounds and parts was never a problem for me. I would calmly say to Lindsey, "We just can't have a whole album of drum parts made on tissue boxes. As we can't have the whole album with John not playing bass. We could do some of it—*should* do some of it. But we can't have that take over the whole thing."

MD: What are some of your favorite moments on the album?

Mick: "Over And Over" is just lovely. What I got to play was so spacious and simple, but it really supported Christine's melody. And definitely "What Makes You Think You're The One." We recorded the drums to a boom box, that main sound. And it just kicks ass. From the jump we decided it would be that very abstract part—not a kick, snare, hi-hat thing. For other songs, Lindsey and I would have these hitting sessions, where you pick up this and you pick up that and play it. I loved all that stuff. It's much easier to express little rhythmic things on percussion that, in truth, I sometimes don't have the ultimate technique to do on a drumkit. And I totally get that small sounds are very often the only thing you can do [on a recording]—otherwise you eat up too much space.

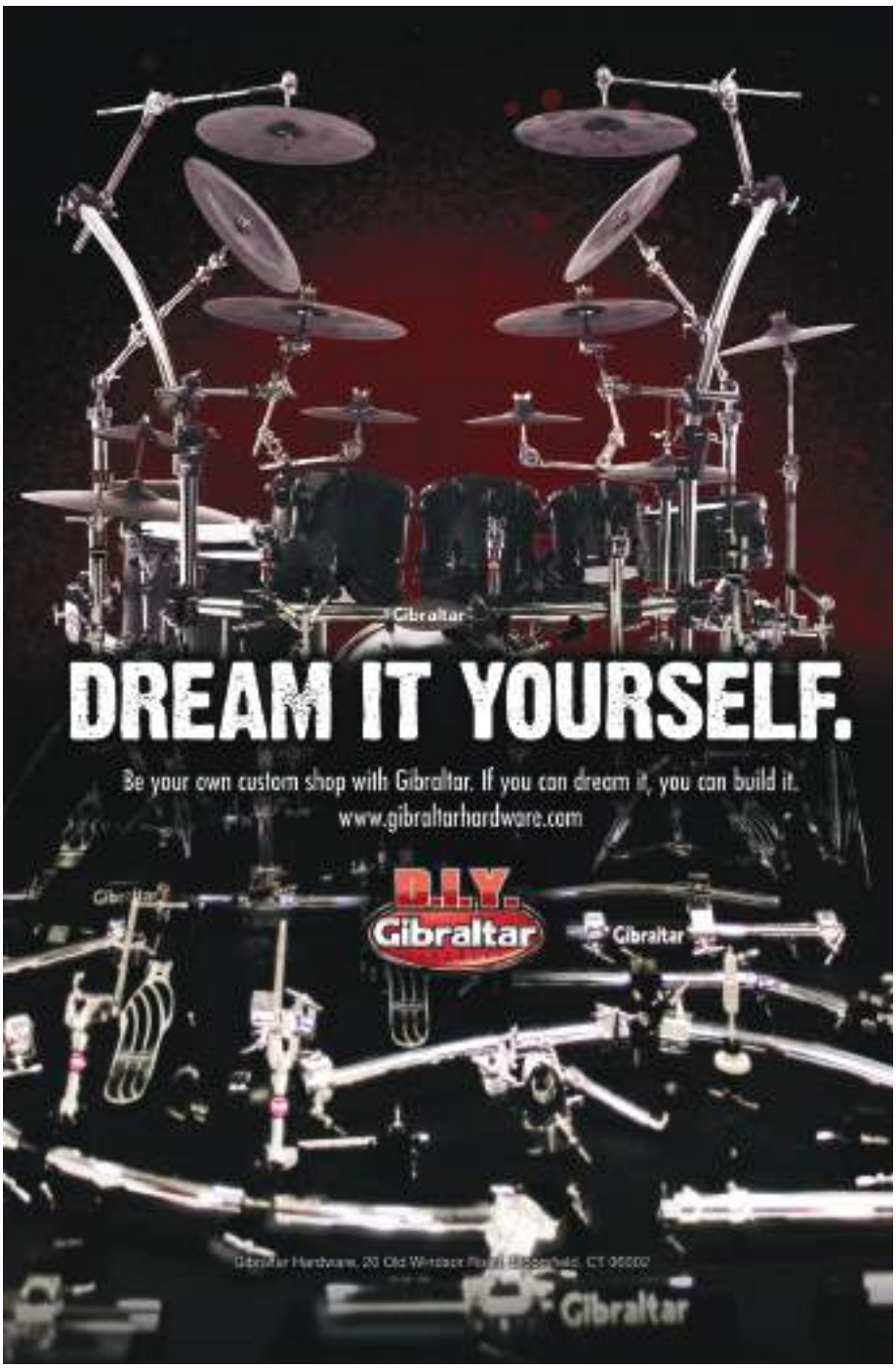
MD: You've always had a nice way of mixing in those "found" percussion sounds, particularly on *Rumours* and *Tusk*.

Mick: We always had loads of great percussion stuff hanging around. Invariably, though, we'd end up hitting rulers and pencils on matchboxes. We were definitely into that whole thing. I'd done a little of that with Peter Green. Lindsey was happy to find a percussionist who wouldn't get all put out of joint that he was playing a Kleenex box.

MD: What was it like tracking the song "Tusk"?

Mick: "Tusk" came from a soundcheck. Lindsey would play that riff, and we just played what we played around it. When we started the album Lindsey began working that into a song. And I think it got discarded, really.

Then I went on holiday in Normandy



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to visit my mother after my father passed away. I'd arrived on a weekend and drunk massive amounts of brandy. The local band in this fishing village started playing early the following morning right outside my sister's house, where we were staying. And I thought, *I'll never get to sleep now.* So I went out onto the balcony and had some coffee to try and feel alive. And every ten minutes they would come around this side of the village and the crowd would get bigger and bigger. It was like the Pied Piper. I thought, *What a great idea—people really seem to be enjoying this.*

So I went back to the band and suggested that we find a great brass band and record them playing Lindsey's riff with Fleetwood Mac. We pulled it off the back burner, and I went to see Dr. Bartz at USC and made a whole project of it, with them coming up with the arrangement. Everyone thought I was insane, and then I said, "Let's do it at Dodger Stadium." And they said, "You can f'ing pay for it!" But we got it for nothing.

It was built around me playing toms. Then we made a huge loop of it—about thirty feet long, pencils holding it in place around the room—so it would keep feeding through the tape machine. The rest of it is sundry bits of overdubs. It was a mind-boggling thing. These days you just put it on the grid and loop it. That became one of the classic Mac songs, this epic thing. It basically came from a soundcheck and me surviving a hangover in Normandy.

MD: After the drum solo in the middle, is there an actual count from that back into the riff? It seems pretty random.

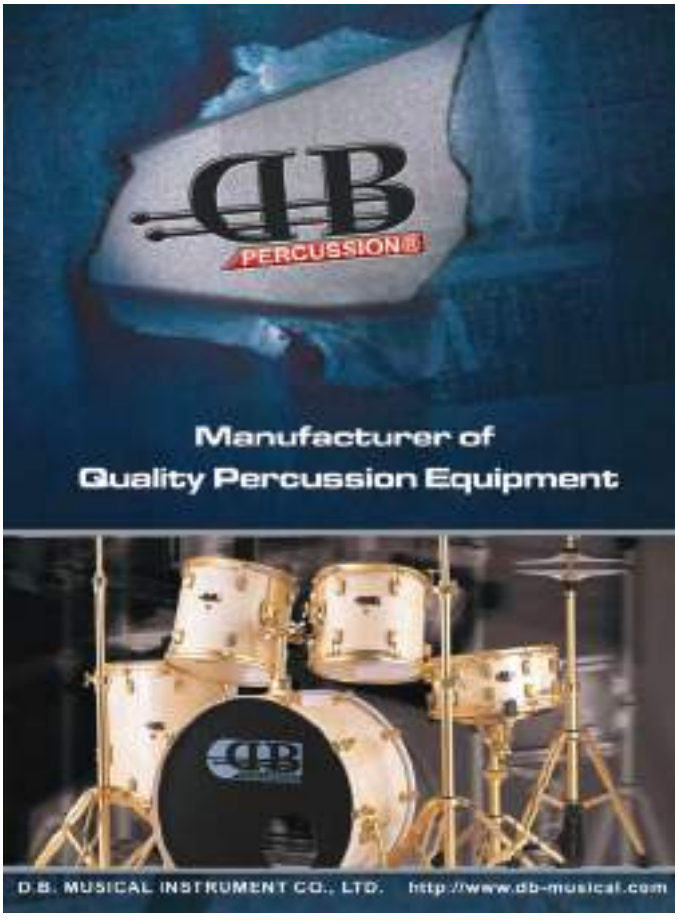
Mick: It is. On stage I just let it loose. I don't know how long I'm going to go. Everyone will go, "We've got to know how long you'll go on. We've got to bring keyboard brass pads back in." But I can't count it. So I just go [sings the sound of rattling drums] and as soon as I go onto the cymbals [makes a whooshing noise to indicate a cymbal swell]…BOOM! You can see me signal that I'm coming off the cymbals back onto the drums, and we never miss it. And they don't have to count, and neither do I! [laughs]

MD: "Sara" was another big hit from *Tusk*, and that has some lovely brushwork, as does the live version of "Never Going Back Again" you've been doing on recent tours. Did you have much brush playing in your background?

Mick: Yes, absolutely, through the necessity of playing and practicing in flats and little apartments, the need to keep quiet. In the early days I played with a piano and upright bass, pretending I was a jazz drummer when I wasn't. I'd be stuffed in the corner with a hi-hat and snare drum, gigging around London. I did a lot of that in the early days. We're doing "Sara" in the set now and I'm really enjoying that. Brushwork is not used a lot now, and through the years I've always been up for doing that. I didn't record much if any at all with Peter Green. But on stage we used to do a couple of really slow blues numbers where I'd pull out the brushes.

MD: "Second Hand News" is considerably less ambitious than "Tusk," but it also has an interesting layering of drum parts and percussion.

Mick: That was me sitting down at the



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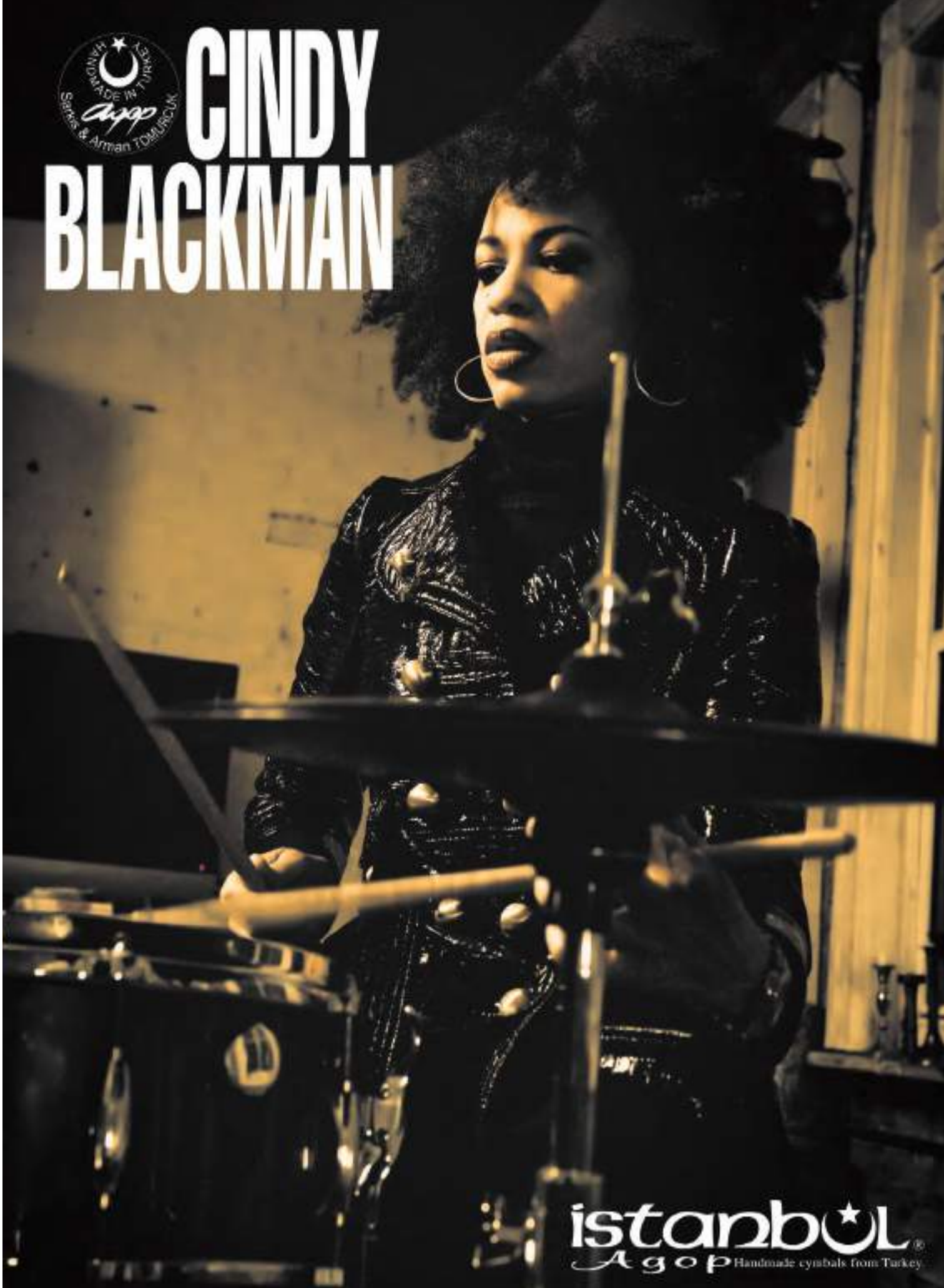
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kit playing bass drum, snare, and hi-hat. And then I was overdubbing those tom fills and some cymbals over the top of it. And there's a rhythm that Lindsey tapped out on the plastic-padded end of the mixing console that runs throughout the song. It adds a really nice slap-and-tickle sound. More found percussion from Lindsey.

MD: And "Big Love" also has a layered, galloping feel like "Second Hand News." Is that you playing along with a drum machine?

Mick: Yes. "Big Love" is very much an example of full cooperation between Lindsey and me. Several of Lindsey's songs from *Tango In The Night* had been intended for a solo album. He had started doing some of the percussion work on that song, and I stripped some of it off and put some overdubs on, like the snare drums. That's crafting a thing together instead of doing what I normally do, which is just play the song. That was a fairly unique one.

MD: You've had a percussionist on the last two Fleetwood Mac tours, but not this time out. Has that forced you to adapt your part on songs like "Tusk," which has a lot going on in terms of drums and percussion?

Mick: Not really. Steve Rinkov, my drum tech—who's a great drummer—is playing on about three or four songs. On "Tusk" he's doing some extra tom work, because we don't want to be playing to loops. I prefer playing without percussion, really. And I'm really having some fun with a lot of little musical touches—nothing highly intricate, just doing a lot of chime and cymbal work with pads. Just whacking the pads once, I know I can have the chimes come in when I want. It gives a little bit of tinsel here and there, which would have been covered by a percussion player.

MD: Back in the '70s you were very active in managing Fleetwood Mac's affairs. Did you find that robbed you of the time and energy you needed to be the band's drummer?

Mick: I'd always done that, even back in the early days. Making sure we got to gigs on time, picking everyone up, reading the road maps—it was second nature. It never occurred to me I was wasting energy I could've used on the music. Not to play down my role as a drummer, but I just became the dude that did all that [managerial] stuff. And I don't walk around thinking of drumming all day long. I know some people do. But I never crucified myself learning paradiddles and all the different technical stuff. I sort of fudged my way through. I just couldn't get it together to nail all that stuff.

For me, being a musician is not necessarily always about your own playing. It's how you react when playing with other musicians, especially if you're just not in the habit of playing with other people. Is it meaningful that you're inclined to sit in a room and play by yourself for five hours a day? Yeah, it is. But I would say what is more meaningful—and I always say this to young players—is to reach out to play with other people. Even if you find people that in your estimation aren't terribly good, you'll raise their game. In raising their game, you create this chemistry, this knowledge of natural musical chemistry, which I do know about.

MD: That's a good way to describe your role in Fleetwood Mac. You don't write or sing the songs, but you're a vital element to the band's chemistry, as a player and a person.

Mick: Looking back on what I've done, I'm happiest with that part of my portfolio; that's probably what I'm most proud of. I want to feel that I can really pull that chemistry out of the players around me. I'm not really that worried about me. You get so obsessed about your instrument. To a certain extent that's necessary, and it's great. But I want to encourage someone as a player. It's about the people you're with, and whether you're doing the very best job collectively. That's how you get a band with a sound. That's how you get a band that works. That's how you get John and me, that's how you get Fleetwood Mac. All deference to other people Stevie and Lindsey have played with over the years, it isn't that.

Know Your Styles

COVER THE BASICS AND YOU CAN **PLAY JUST ABOUT ANYTHING**

by Jeremy Hummel

One of my biggest goals for my students is to help them become well-rounded drummers. While we spend a significant amount of time in our lessons covering concepts and techniques that pertain to their musical style of choice, I always have them work on other genres (world rhythms, jazz, etc.), even if they don't want to make a career out of drumming.

This diversified approach is not always an easy sell. Students tend to go along with you for a bit, but now and then you'll hear, "This bossa nova is great and all, but can you show me some double bass licks instead?" I recently had an experience that helped me justify to my students the importance of being well rounded. Here's how it went down.

THE CHALLENGE

I was called to do a corporate party gig with a 6 to 8 P.M. time slot. *Great*, I thought, *I don't have to get home at 4 A.M.* I was going to be backing a female singer I had played with before, plus two top-notch jazz musicians I'd never performed with. The gig was going to be fairly low key, and the material would consist mostly of vocal jazz standards.

Now, I've played in clubs since the age of nine and have been involved with a variety of bands over the years, so there aren't many songs I haven't played or at least heard. But when I received the set list the afternoon of the gig, I realized that not only had I not played at least seventy-five percent of the material, *I had never even heard these songs*.

Knowing there wasn't time to learn two hours of music during the twenty-five-minute drive to the gig, I did what has always served me well: I picked ten songs and downloaded them from iTunes. Even if I couldn't learn them note for note, I could at least figure out their basic beat and vibe.

Of those ten songs I downloaded, how many do you think we actually played? Drum roll, please… *One!* Still, because I've learned the basic beats for different styles over the years, the gig went off without a hitch.

THE EVENT

Before the performance, I made sure to offer a disclaimer to the other musicians. "I'm familiar with only a few of these songs," I admitted. Of course, I wanted to seem like Joe Cool and pretend I could play everything in my sleep. But remember, as the drummer, we usually count off the tunes!

So here's how the gig went.

First tune. The piano player says, "This is a ballad. It's an original."

Fantastic, I'm thinking. *Not only are we starting the night with a song I don't know, but it's one he wrote.* (Since the pianist wrote the song, he could potentially be extra picky about how it's played.) But I recalled an old musical adage: "When one knows not what to play, it's often best to play nothing at all." So I let the pianist and bass player get the tune rolling as I listened for the melody and form. Once I had more of a handle on the structure, I blended my way in with some brushes (which I ended up using the whole evening).

Next tune. Bassman says, "This is a samba." Pianist counts it off, and we're in. *Cool.*

Next tune. "Girl From Ipanema." *Hey, I know this one. Woo-hoo!*

Before the fourth song, both instrumentalists say, "Up-tempo swing." One of them counts it off, and we swing our way to the finish.

The point here is that as long as you know how to play the basic rhythm of a piece—its style—and somebody gives you the tempo, you'll be fine.

THE BIG PICTURE

There are only a few times when pigeonholing yourself within one style of music can work out. One of those is if you're in a band that's working steadily and is on the way to getting signed by a major label. Still, no matter how peachy a situation may seem, bands come and go. All it takes is for one guy (or girl) to go crazy, and the whole thing implodes.

But if you're well rounded enough to do different things, work will come your way. Some people may say, "I

don't want to play that—it's not cool." I don't know about you, but to me playing music of any kind is *way* cooler than working a job you can't stand.

BUT…I'M NOT LOOKING TO DO THIS PROFESSIONALLY

Even if you're not on the path to being a full-time musician, knowing different styles can still come in handy. For example, let's say you go to a club for an open-mic night. Many of us have experienced a situation where the following has occurred.

House-band player: "So, what tunes do you know?"

Guest: "I don't know…. What tunes do *you* know?"

House-band player: "Tons. What do you like to play?"

Guest: "I don't know."

This interaction can go on for several minutes before the band ends up playing something as standard as "Johnny B. Goode." A better scenario would be if someone in the band said to you, "This is a blues shuffle in C." Well, you don't even need to know that it's in C—just play a blues shuffle.

But the best solution of all? *You* get the ball rolling by suggesting a blues shuffle—or a straight-ahead rocker, or a 16th-note funk tune, or….

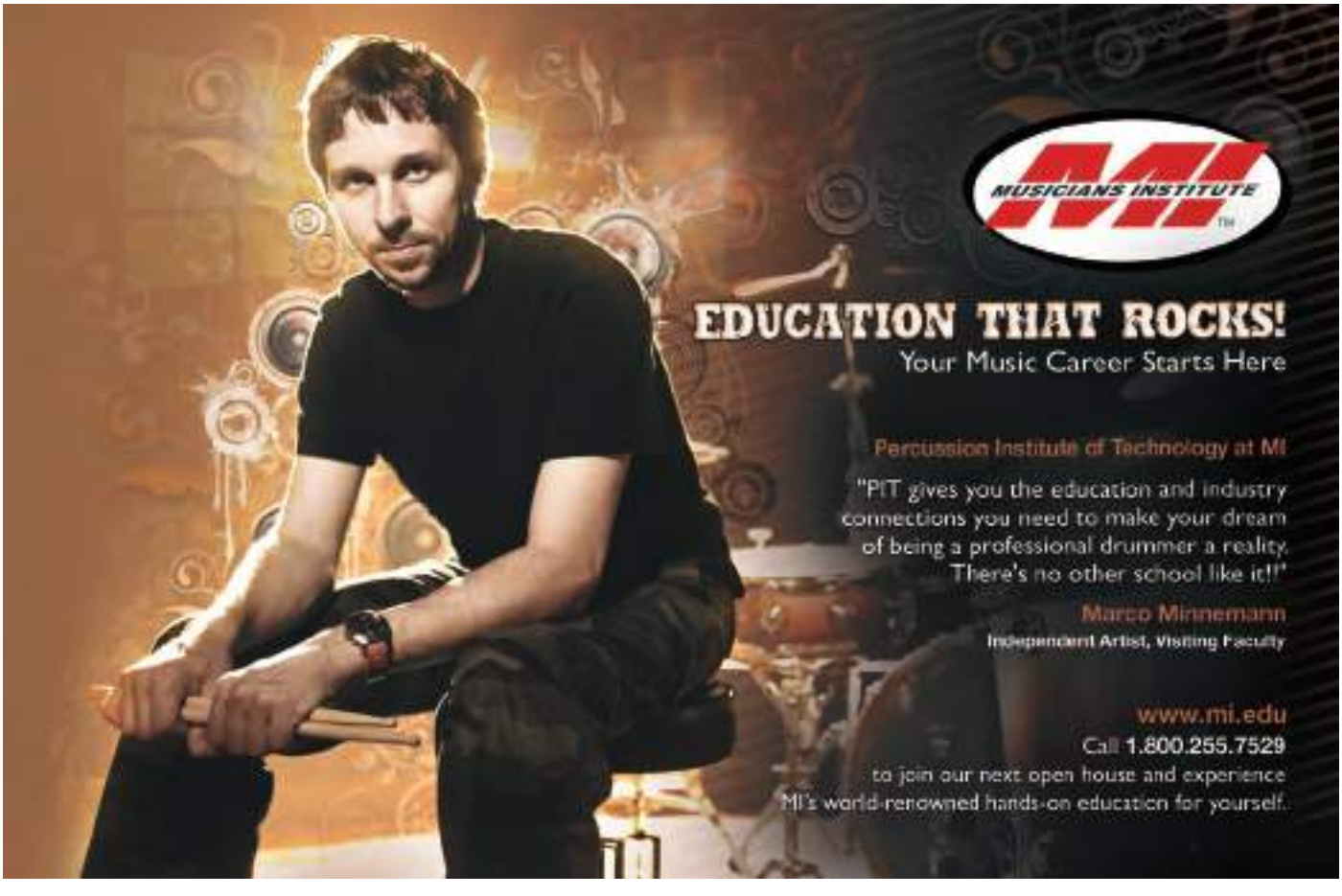
WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

There are tons of different styles and rhythms to learn. One place to start is to pick up Tommy Igoe's *Groove Essentials* poster from Vic Firth. It contains a lot of cool beats from different genres, as well as fun and useful world rhythms.

Another great resource is YouTube. Simply pick a style and type it into the search bar. There are so many lessons now available for free online. Once you get a grasp of the basics of a groove, seek out a reputable drum instructor in your area to fine-tune the feel.

When you're learning new rhythms in a given genre, it's helpful to find recordings of that style to hear how the drums fit into the music. If you start checking out funk beats, for example, ask other musicians who their favorite groove players are. The key is to absorb as much information as possible. Knowledge is power.

Jeremy Hummel was an original member of Breaking Benjamin. He helped that group achieve platinum status with its second release, *We Are Not Alone*. He has since turned his efforts to session work and drum instruction in Pennsylvania. Jeremy can be reached at his Web site, jeremyhummel.com.



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Top 10 Rudiments

PART 3: THE TRIPLE-STROKE ROLL

by Bill Bachman

This month's rudiment is the triple-stroke roll, which is also known as "threes." Once you can play this rudiment well, you'll be armed with the ability to throw in isolated triple beats anywhere around the drumset.

Not many drummers play a complete two-handed triple-stroke roll on the kit. But triple strokes played by individual hands are pretty standard vocabulary. (For that matter, each hand actually plays a triple beat within a single-stroke sextuplet.)

Good-quality triple strokes are not simply bounced on the drumhead, nor is each stroke played individually with the wrist (unless you're playing threes very slowly). It's important to first develop a good double-stroke roll, since triple strokes are an extension of doubles. Threes should be played as flowing full strokes (aka free or legato strokes) where you never pick up the stick but only throw it down on the head like dribbling a ball. The first stroke should be played mainly with the wrist, while the second and third should be played mainly with the fingers. I call this the "alley-oop-oop" technique. Think of the first stroke as the setup throw from the wrist and the second and third strokes as dribbles from the fingers. Immediately after playing the third stroke, the hand should relax so that the stick rebounds to the starting "up" position.

For some players, threes may be easier to play by positioning the hands closer to a French grip (thumbs on top of the stick), because so much finger control is necessary to play the second and third beats. My logic here is that French grip favors the use of the fingers, while German grip (palms down) favors the wrist. When you play these exercises, experiment with different positions between French and German grip to find what works best for you. It's good to be comfortable with a bunch of hand positions, since different techniques will make certain patterns easier to play. Ultimately there is no "right" technique, and you want to be able to switch positions on the fly.

Practice the following exercises with a metronome (or play them along with your favorite tunes), and don't go any faster than you can play comfortably. Keep in mind that when the going gets tough it's always better to play a bit weakly and bouncy than it is to stroke out all three notes. Avoid holding on to the sticks too tightly and forcing out all three beats.

In addition to the exercises provided, be sure to practice the triple-stroke roll by going evenly from slow to fast to slow over one minute, gradually changing your technique in correlation with the speed. If you practice for only five to ten minutes a day, you'll be sure to see results by the time next month's rudiment comes down the pike. Good luck!

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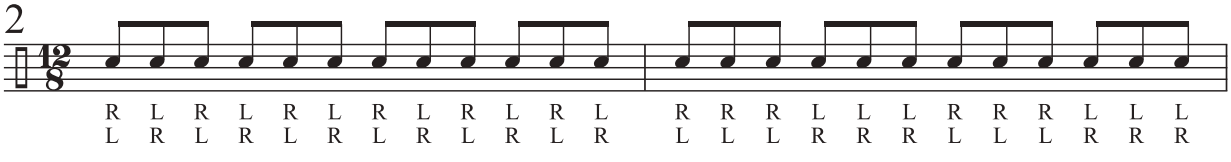
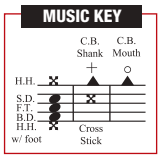


Bill Bachman is an international drum clinician and a freelance drumset player in Nashville, Tennessee. He is the author of the Row-Loff books *Rudimental Logic*, *Quad Logic*, and *Bass Logic*, the producer of the instructional drum DVDs *Reefed Beats* and *Rudimental Beats: A Technical Guide For Everyone With Sticks In Their Hands*, and the designer of Vic Firth's Heavy Hitter practice pads. For more information, visit billbachman.net.

Afro-Cuban Rhythms

FOR DRUMSET: **CONGA**

by Maria Martinez

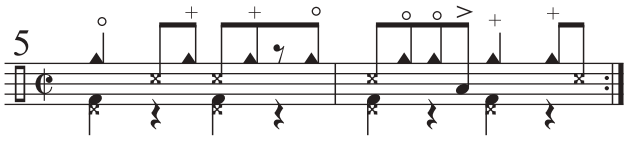


The conga is a rhythm and dance that comes from Carnival in Cuba. This weeklong celebration occurs before Lent and includes wearing costumes, playing music, singing, and dancing. The festivities take place in various Cuban cities, and each has its own interpretation of the conga rhythm.

Typical conga instrumentation consists of congas, snare drums, cencerros (cowbells), bombos (bass drums), sartenes (frying pans), trompetas chinas (Chinese trumpets), and trumpets. It's common for the trumpet to lead the vocalist in a call-and-response theme.

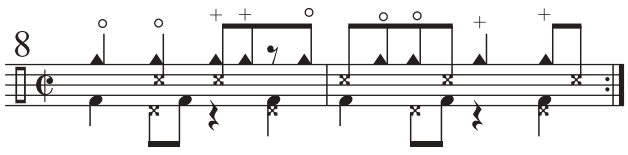
The following drumset interpretations of the conga rhythm are played on the snare drum, with the bass drum playing the bombo part. The underlying pulse of a 2-3 rumba clave is implied but not stated in the rhythm.

This conga variation states the 2-3 rumba clave, played by the rimclick and accented floor tom figures. The cowbell part is one of many different possible variations. Low tones are indicated with an "o" and should be played on the open end of the cowbell. The "+" indicates high tones played near the closed end.

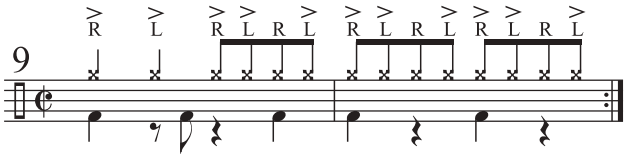


In this variation, the 2-3 rumba clave is played lightly on the snare drum and accented heavily on the floor tom. The cowbell part is a different variation using open and closed tones.

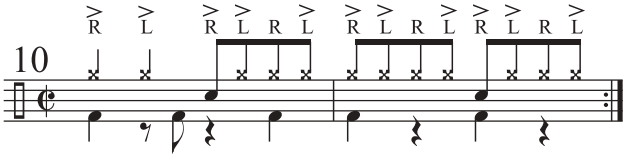
Here are two more versions that state the 2-3 rumba clave with rimclicks.



This example (written in 2-3 rumba clave) is a simplified version of the conga groove that would work well for a drummer playing with other percussionists.

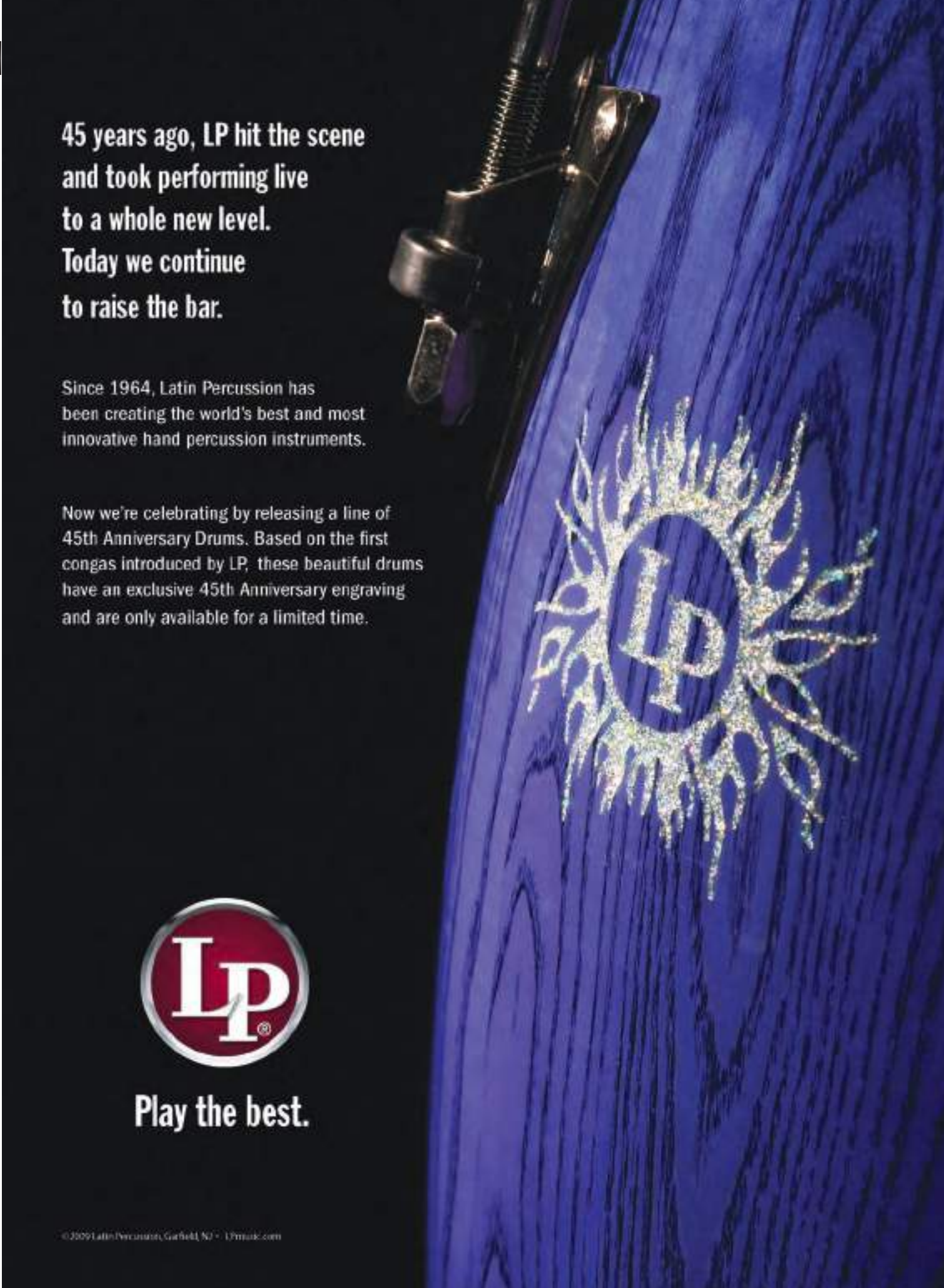


By adding the snare drum on beat 2 of each bar, you can create a funky, contemporary adaptation of the conga.



I encourage you to listen to recorded versions of this style so that you can interpret it in an authentic way. Familiarize yourself with the feel of the music, the traditional percussion instruments used, and the parts that are typically played on those instruments. Once you internalize how this unique groove feels in its original context, you'll be able to create your own hybrid interpretations.

The examples in this lesson are excerpted from **Maria Martinez**'s book/CD/DVD *Afro-Cuban Coordination For Drumset*, which is published by Hal Leonard. Used with permission. For more information, go to worldbeatrhythms.com.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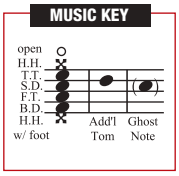
MELODIC SOLOING **AT ITS BEST**

by Eric Novod



Charles Mingus was one of the most gifted and prolific jazz composers and bassists of the twentieth century. The personnel in his band was constantly shifting, as some opted to leave the Mingus workshop to pursue new endeavors while others were rather bluntly forced out by the highly volatile bandleader.

Every seat on Mingus's bandstand was seemingly up for grabs at all times—except one: the drum chair. Dannie Richmond occupied that seat for more than twenty years.

Although he started out playing tenor sax, Richmond had natural rhythmic capabilities. This caught Mingus's attention, and the bassist recommended that Dannie begin playing drums. Mingus needed a drummer who could switch from 4/4 swing to a double-time 3/4 waltz at the drop of a hat, while also being able to maneuver through the fifty-one-measure form of "Remembering Rockefeller At Attica" without losing his place. When Mingus realized he had found exactly that drummer in Richmond, he kept Dannie on board for the long haul.

There wasn't much room for drum solos within the dense arrangements of Mingus's music. But when Richmond *did* solo, he often offered master classes in creating melodic statements on the drumset. This characteristic makes perfect sense when you consider that Richmond was a multi-instrumentalist with a distinct ear for how to traverse sophisticated rhythmic territory with a strong sense of melody.

Now we'll examine two of Richmond's solos with the Mingus band. Both are perfect examples of how Dannie, who died in 1988, created thoughtful, natural, and musical statements on the drums. Both of these gems were recorded in 1960.

"FOLK FORMS #1," CHARLES MINGUS PRESENTS CHARLES MINGUS

This twenty-four-measure solo (two choruses of a twelve-bar blues) is a simple, perfectly executed melodic statement that makes use of call and response. If you divide the solo into six four-bar phrases, you'll notice how each phrase consists of a "call" (measures 1 and 2, 5 and 6, 9 and 10, 13 and 14, 17 and 18, and 21 and 22) and a "response" (measures 3 and 4, 7 and 8, 11 and 12, 15 and 16, 19 and 20, and 23 and 24). If you ever find yourself faced with playing a twelve-, twenty-four-, or thirty-six-bar solo, creating a call-and-response blueprint like this is always a classy musical choice.

Notice how the calls start simply with spaced-out, swinging 8th notes. Richmond then develops blistering triplets and strongly accented 16th notes for the apex of the solo in measures 17 and 18. With the exception of the first and last responses, which vary slightly, every other response is nearly identical. Running a motif through your solos in this way can be very musical and comforting, as the listener will have something to grab on to in your phrases.

Richmond's dynamics here are very logical. His calls are always louder than his responses, which further differentiates the two parts of his phrases. The calls also get louder as the solo progresses, in order to add additional drama to an already dynamic style of soloing.

To conclude his statement, Richmond combines the 8th notes and triplets in his final call (measures 21 and 22) and alters the rhythm of his response in measure 24 to signal that he has completed his solo. (8:50)

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"MELODY FROM THE DRUMS," MYSTERIOUS BLUES

Richmond's magnum opus was a nine-and-a-half-minute unaccompanied piece entitled "Melody From The Drums." The middle of the solo ranges from whisper soft to quite intense, with clear melodic ideas played on the drums. The opening fifteen measures are presented here to demonstrate another way to organize a solo—the continued development of a single rhythmic idea, or "variation on a theme."

Instead of using a call-and-response approach as he did in "Folk Forms #1," here Richmond introduces a rhythm (measure 1) and develops it throughout the first fifteen bars. Notice how measure 2 is a repetition of measure 1 with some dynamic variation. Measure 3 strays from the rhythm a bit but still hints at the opening theme. Measure 4 moves briefly to 16th notes before reverting back to the rhythm of the previous three measures. Measures 5–8 feature more variation—rhythmic and dynamic—of the theme. The over-the-barline patterns in measures 9 and 10 end the development section of the opening theme.

The last five measures of this section feature a run of rapid 16th and 32nd notes. Note how measures 11 and 14, especially the tom rhythms in measure 14, still hint at the main theme.

Hopefully these simple but sophisticated musical ideas from Dannie Richmond will shed some light on how to come up with well-thought-out and melodic drum solos.

Eric Novod can be reached at jerseydrum@aol.com.

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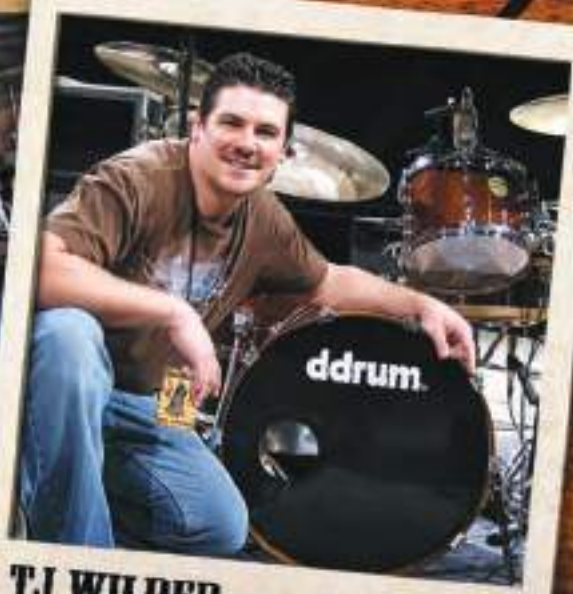

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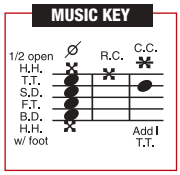
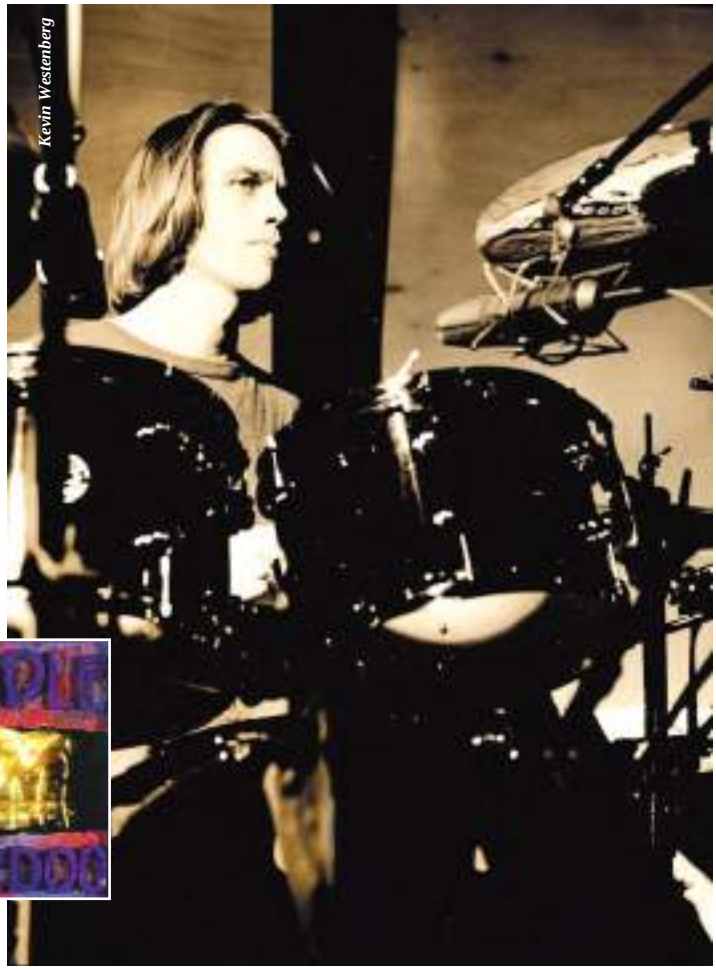
Matt Cameron

ON TEMPLE OF THE DOG'S "WOODEN JESUS"

by Mike Malinin




Kevin Westenberg

Matt Cameron has been one of the most influential rock drummers of the past two decades. Many of the songs he played with Soundgarden, such as "Hands All Over," "Rusty Cage," and the well-known "Black Hole Sun," are modern classics that highlight his drumming.

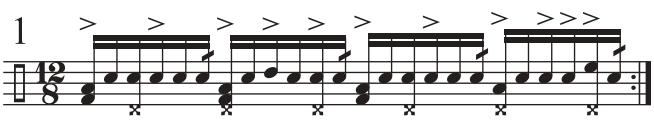
In addition to his obvious technical skill, Matt, who is currently a member of Pearl Jam, is incredibly musical and has an uncanny sense of exactly what to play to propel a song in the right direction. In fact, the first time I heard "My Wave," off Soundgarden's hugely influential 1994 album, *Superunknown*, I was actually upset when the first verse began. Matt kept off the cymbals and laid down a simple groove with the floor tom and snare in sync. I was upset because I *never* would have thought to do that—it was so simple and cool. This was one of those times in my life when, on hearing a song for the first time, I realized that I wouldn't have been able to come up with anything nearly as good as what I was hearing. I had the same feeling when I heard Stewart Copeland on The Police's "Walking On The Moon."

I admire so many things that Matt has played that it was difficult to settle on a single track to discuss with him. In the end I chose "Wooden Jesus" from the 1991 self-titled release by Temple Of The Dog, which featured members of Soundgarden and Mother Love Bone, who would soon become Pearl Jam. The album was a tribute to Malfunkshun/Mother Love Bone singer Andrew Wood, who had passed away in 1990.

"Wooden Jesus" is one of the more drum-driven tracks on *Temple Of The Dog*. When I talked to Matt about his parts for the song, I had to admit to him that I was going for one of his grooves when I recorded "Iris" with The Goo Goo Dolls. He laughed, saying, "We all get everything we play from somewhere."

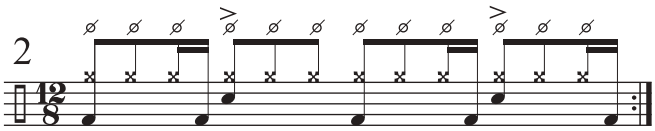
The drum sound on "Wooden Jesus" is very powerful. "I used my 8-lug 6x14 Keplinger snare drum," Matt says. "I believe I had a clear Emperor on it. The kit I used was a Yamaha birch I bought in '82, with a 24" bass drum and 12", 13", and 16" toms. The snare was made around '86, and I purchased it that year—around the same time I joined Soundgarden. I was having trouble being heard at rehearsals. But once I unleashed the Keppy, I was *always* heard. I used the same snare on 'Spoonman,' although it was a little pingy on that track. I never used dampening in the studio during my Soundgarden/Temple days."

"Wooden Jesus" highlights exactly what so many people admire about Matt's playing. His opening groove comes out of left field, and it becomes the pattern for the verses.



"I was thinking about Steve Gadd when I came up with that part," Cameron recalls. "I guess I was trying to do something along the lines of Paul Simon's '50 Ways To Leave Your Lover.'" Matt went back and overdubbed some percussion to help the track move along.

After the first verse, he shifts seamlessly into a much straighter groove, while keeping an upbeat feel. This is the groove I was attempting to emulate for the chorus of "Iris." (Thanks, Matt!)



In the second verse the groove goes back to the original pattern, and Matt once again moves into a straighter groove for the second chorus. After this section, he never looks back. He switches to the ride for the guitar solo, and his playing is really open from then on out, including a short breakdown after the solo. Any drummer can appreciate the open feel that Matt keeps until the end of the song. He plays a lot of great fills throughout, but he never strays far from the groove. And that's something everybody can learn from.

Matt Cameron has always been, and still is, one of the most exciting yet most tasteful drummers in rock. There are so many great musical moments in his recordings, with "Wooden Jesus" being just one standout among many.

Wendy Marvel

In this series, **Mike Malinin**, drummer for the platinum-selling band **The Goo Goo Dolls**, takes his magnifying glass to burning tracks recorded by some of his drumming buddies. Tunes from Mike's side project Forty Marshas can be heard at myspace.com/fortymarshas.

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MODERN DRUMMER FESTIVAL WEEKEND 2008

Celebrating its nineteenth year, the prestigious Modern Drummer Festival returned last September after a one-year hiatus, with an amazing lineup of world-class drumming superstars that many are calling the most inspiring to date. In keeping with *MD*'s flair for featuring musical diversity within the pages of the magazine, the styles of metal, jazz, Latin, funk, prog, R&B, pop, rock, and fusion were represented during this legendary two-day event.

The Festival was held for the first time at the Performing Arts Center at Purchase College, located about twenty-five miles northeast of New York City near the Connecticut border. At the theater, which is set on a sprawling campus with ample parking and a relaxed vibe, seating was similar to the 2006 MD Festival venue, the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, but a bit more intimate. The acoustics were music-friendly, and the room's bi-level balcony design ensured there wasn't a bad seat in the house.

Story by Mike Haid • Photos by Christopher Otazo

Mike Haid

THOMAS PRIDGEN

Kicking off the show was Pridgen in his Festival debut, and without hesitation, the MD Readers Poll Up & Coming award winner exploded into a lengthy head-spinning solo on his visually stunning DW Collector's series maple VLT drumkit, which featured a gigantic pair of 18" Zildjian hi-hats. The enthusiastic, hard-hitting Pridgen worked odd groupings into his fills and grooves as he displayed serious over-the-barline chops combined with incredible hand and foot speed. He closed his powerhouse set with a jazzy, funk-laced improvisational trio performance that featured trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire and keyboardist Michael Aaberg. The first of many standing ovations of the weekend ensued as Pridgen accepted his MD Readers Poll award. The Festival was off to a roaring start.

BACKSTAGE BONUS INTERVIEWS

After each set at the Festival, the performers were ushered into a backstage interview room to go over some of the concepts they addressed during their set or to discuss other drum-specific topics. Here we've included a collection of musical examples taken from these interviews.

MOVING DOUBLES

In his clinic, Pridgen discussed ways to develop single-foot double strokes on the bass drum. Here's a brief solo that he played during his backstage interview that demonstrates these ideas.

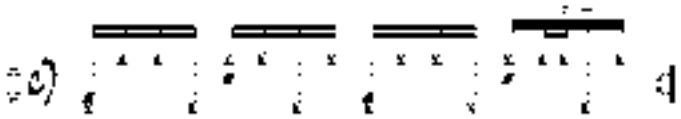
Click here to see video from the Festival

BILLY WARD

New York drummer/educator and *MD* columnist Billy Ward was up next, with his electric jazz trio featuring guitarist Barry Coates and bassist Bill Urmson. A crowd favorite, Ward launched directly into an edgy 5/4 piece from his *Out The Door* CD. It was Ward's second appearance at the MD Festival, and the drummer seemed more relaxed than at his 2000 debut. Billy let the music do the talking and engaged in relatively little conversation with the audience. Using his usual/unusual arsenal of sticks, brushes, woven-head mallets, and crushed-can and custom shoe-heel shakers, Ward demonstrated fluid and dynamic jazz chops, emotion, and, most important, musicality. He performed on a beautiful five-piece DW Jazz series kit with large, washy Zildjian K Constantinople cymbals and prototype 12" custom hi-hats. With brushes in hand, Ward closed his set with a captivating ballad, "Song For Jo." The crowd responded jubilantly, the trio departed, and the door prizes came rolling out to the stage.

CREATIVE GROOVE CONCEPTS

Ward is known for coming up with unconventional ways of orchestrating grooves around the kit. Here's a beat he improvised that shows how the left foot can help create a sense of motion in an otherwise standard 16th-note beat.



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WILL CALHOUN

It was obvious that many in attendance were there to see Living Colour's drumming genius, Will Calhoun, in his second Festival appearance. As soon as the drummer's name was announced, the audience erupted with enthusiasm. One word best describes Calhoun's performance: colorful. From his vibrant African dashiki shirt to his bright-yellow Mapex Saturn series double bass kit to his vast array of acoustic and electronic percussion, the visual aspect became an exciting part of Will's presentation.

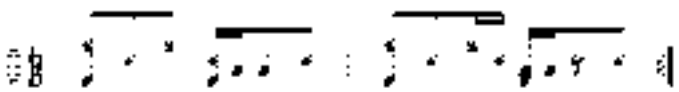
He began an extended solo with nylon brushes and demonstrated great rudimental chops combined with ostinato foot patterns and hand/foot combinations. When he switched to sticks, all hell broke loose as he blazed fills and flourishes over another ostinato foot pattern. The rhythmic pyrotechnics continued as Calhoun soloed intensely, with super-quick hands, over African-style rhythms. The man was on fire!

The next phase saw Will lay down a serious funk groove over an African-sounding loop. Well, at first we *thought* it was a loop, but a closer look revealed that it was Calhoun's right foot playing 16th notes at about 110 bpm, with the newly reinvented Sleishman Twin Pedal. His rhythmic interpretations over this lengthy foot pattern were astonishing, as he used a smaller, higher-pitched 18" bass drum for accents to augment his blazing right foot.

Now enter the electronics. Calhoun left the acoustic kit and began a Middle Eastern–sounding musical journey on a rig that included, among other gadgets, the ddrum 3, Korg Wavedrum, EBow flute, and TC Electronic G-System. To cap off this rhythmic thrill ride, Calhoun brought the house down by launching into a play-along with the Living Colour mega-hit "Cult Of Personality." A deafening roar, a standing O—enough said.

AFRICAN-INSPIRED PATTERNS

Much of Calhoun's fresh and modern drumming style is based on blending a wide variety of influences, like Nigerian dance rhythms, James Brown–style funk, and modern electronica. Here's a cool 6/8 groove from Will that's inspired by traditional African grooves.



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NDUGU CHANCLER

An air of awe fell upon the room as studio legend Ndugu Chancler took the stage. It's doubtful that many were prepared for the life lessons that this master of countless sessions and high-profile gigs was about to impart. From hands to mallets, brushes to sticks, Chancler established a hypnotic feel and never let go. He built his lengthy, improvisational solo with graceful dynamics, utilizing every aspect of his Yamaha PHX kit, which included heavily angled Paiste cymbals and a pair of Toca timbales. Ndugu's charismatic playing was packed with emotion and his groove was relentless, but it was his wisdom and his deep knowledge of the music business that were priceless to his set. Chancler kept a chart-topping groove going as he narrated his own success story, from Miles Davis to Michael Jackson. Something much more than drumming skill was conveyed in this performance.

MILES DAVIS BEAT

Chancler's discography spans everything from pop legend Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean" to fusion great George Duke's recent album *Dukey Treats*. In his interview, Ndugu demonstrated the basic beat he used for the Miles Davis tune "Directions."

Click here to see video from the Festival

SIMON PHILLIPS

The torch was passed from one studio legend to another, as Saturday's headlining act featured one of the world's most revered drumming icons, Simon Phillips, and his all-star band Protocol. A fusion pioneer, double bass innovator, and master of ambidextrous open-handed technique, Phillips took the energy level through the roof. It was classic Simon!

In his third MD Festival appearance, the drummer played a massive green-lacquer Tama Starclassic kit, including his signature snare drum, Octobans, and a gong drum, with the exuberance of a drummer half his age. After engaging the crowd with an exercise in handclapping clave patterns in 7/4, Phillips invited Billy Ward and Ndugu Chancler up for an impromptu jam session on his own composition "Biplane To Bermuda," which featured the 7/4 clave.

This was arguably the high point of the Festival, as these three masters of rhythm put on a display of professionalism that exemplified what playing *music* is all about: listening, finding a part that fits, and making effective use of dynamics. The closing tune, a Phillips/Mitchel Forman original called "Indian Summer," confirmed that Simon is still one of the greatest fusion drummers on the planet. You could feel his spirit rise as he performed with the kind of passion that drives every great artist to push the envelope beyond his or her own expectations. It was truly captivating. The lengthy standing ovation carried on until the house lights came up, and day one of the 2008 Modern Drummer Festival was now in the history books.

SNARE DRUM WARM-UP

Here's Simon's favorite hand exercise. The idea is to make all the 16ths sound completely even, especially during the sticking changes.

Click here to see video from the Festival

CARMINE APPICE'S SLAMM

Sunday's energized opener, rock icon Carmine Appice and his six-piece drum-based stage show, SLAMM, indeed slammed into action with a surprise performance that sparked the crowd and set the pace for the day's high-energy lineup. The hard-rocking, street-punk-style set opened with a drum battle, with Carmine, Zoilo "Z-Man" Ruiz, Veronica Bellino, Walker Adams, and Felipe Torres on two kits, plastic buckets, and trash cans, and Artie Dillon providing guitar accompaniment. Appice handled the double-drumming duties with the same deep pocket that earned him legend status with Vanilla Fudge, Rod Stewart, and Jeff Beck. The closing number featured a flashy drum-line-type duel between Carmine and Z-Man—on the same marching snare.

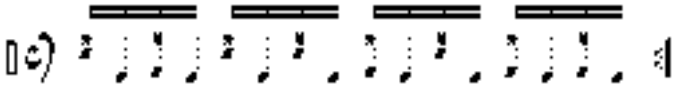
Click here to see video from the Festival

DEREK RODDY

As the SLAMM crew exited the stage to a chorus of cheers, it quickly became metal-mania time. Shadows Fall drumming star Jason Bittner welcomed blast-beat master Derek Roddy to the stage, and Roddy launched into a hyperdrive play-along that drew devil horns from the multitude of metalheads in attendance. Roddy played a massive Sonor SQ2 double bass kit with a six-pedal setup (Sonor and Axis pedals) and an array of Meinl cymbals. He displayed a strong groove with versatile, ambidextrous chops and solidified his reputation for having some of the fastest feet in metal. He even managed to sneak in a bit of impressive left-foot clave during a driving metal groove, on a foot pedal mounted with a ribbon crasher. Roddy's personable Q&A unveiled an intelligent, witty, and levelheaded star on the rise.

DOUBLE BASS BALANCE

While breaking down his ridiculously fast double bass technique, Roddy suggested this exercise to help improve balance between the feet.



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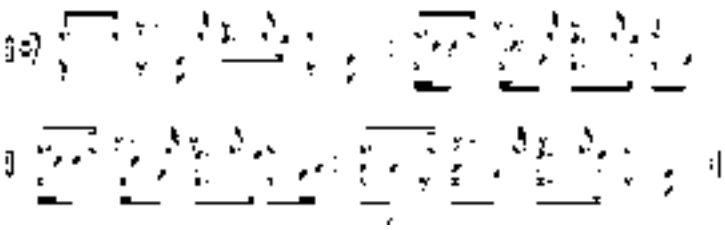
DAFNIS PRIETO

After the crowd came down from Roddy's high-flying set, the over-the-top Latin jazz drumming of Dafnis Prieto changed the tone drastically but kept the energy up. Prieto, in fact, displayed one of the Festival's most refreshing, rhythmically deep, and individualistic voices on the drumkit. Seated high above his drums, Dafnis played a spectacular opening solo that darted in and out of various Latin rhythms with blazing speed and a sharp improvisational instinct. He eventually morphed into a unique 6/8 piece that introduced an ultra-tight three-piece horn section. The drummer's piano, bass, and drums trio followed, playing with high-energy, Michel Camilo–style intensity. Prieto was relentless, never letting up through the entire piece.

Dafnis's full sextet of stellar musicians then dug into several diverse, rhythmically complex world-music compositions. Prieto's Latin jazz technique reflects a new direction for this genre, moving away from the left-foot clave of recent years and exploring Latin rhythms with a more improvisational jazz sensibility. After a sensitive ballad and a long, open, jazz-influenced piece, Prieto totally amazed the audience with a capella vocal rhythms layered over a handheld clave pattern. His compact five-piece Yamaha Maple Custom kit included his trademark red LP Jam Block mounted over the 10" rack tom, plus an array of Sabian cymbals, including an intriguingly shaped prototype that replaced Dafnis's signature frying pan. It was obvious by the boisterous crowd reaction that this mind-boggling performance confirmed Prieto's place as a modern-day Latin jazz great.

AFRO-CUBAN GROOVES

This excerpt from Dafnis's interview consists of improvised melodic drum patterns—based on the traditional Cuban rhythmic vocabulary—over a 3-2 rumba clave.



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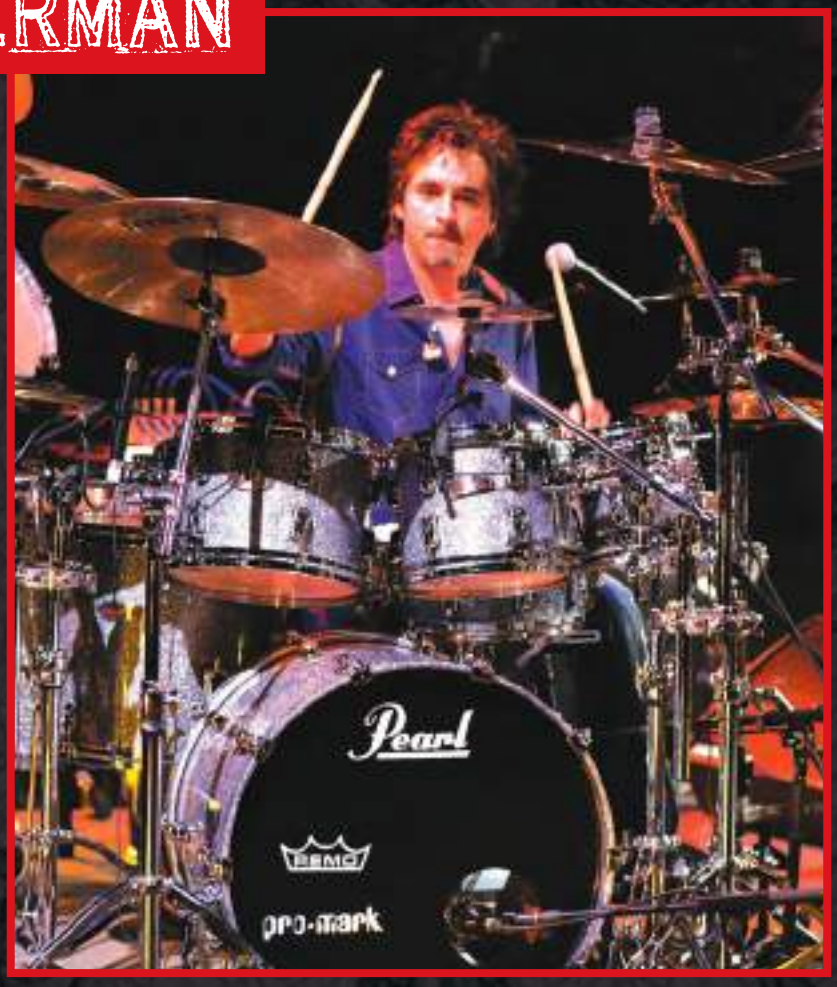
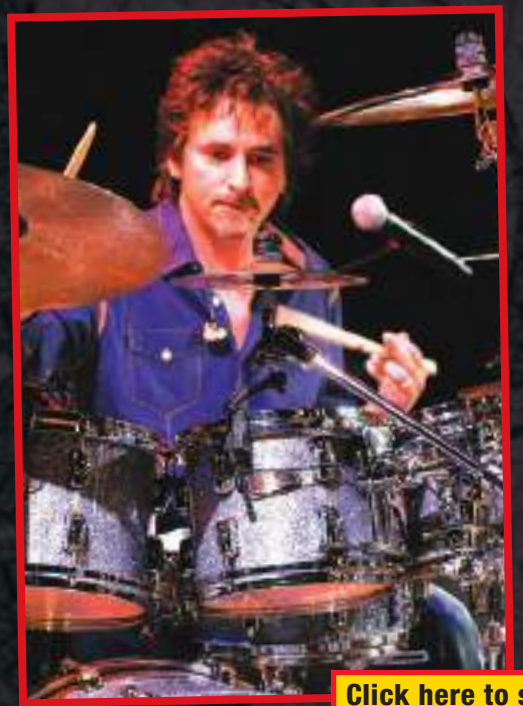
TODD SUCHERMAN



After another intermission filled with countless door prizes, it was time for prog/pop drumming great Todd Sucherman (Styx/Brian Wilson) to shine. Sucherman's recent DVD release, *Methods & Mechanics*, has awakened the international drumming community to Todd's amazing technique, which was on full display during his MD Festival debut. He opened with "Tears Of Joy" by former Mahavishnu Orchestra violinist Jerry Goodman (a tune featured on *Methods & Mechanics*), and then broke down his concept of playing on the track, which is in 13/16. Next, Sucherman performed a dynamic extended solo that seemed to pay homage to his drumming heroes Steve Smith and Simon Phillips. The solo was based on a classic double bass triplet rock groove (also made popular by Tommy Aldridge).

Sucherman put on an outstanding Q&A clinic. He was entertaining and informative as he answered questions and played examples, mainly regarding his highly advanced technique. The drummer bravely went it alone, at center stage, with his kit facing sideways so all could gawk at his ridiculous chops and his dazzling silver sparkle Pearl Masterworks kit. Todd gracefully overcame several glitches in his final powerhouse play-along, Styx's "One With Everything," proving his professionalism and departing the stage to a rousing hail of applause.



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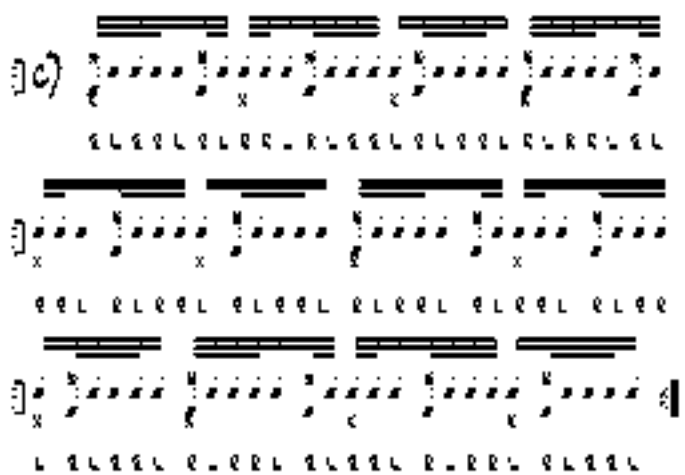
POLYRHYTHMIC PARADIDDLE PATTERN

Here's a slick four-over-three paradiddle lick that Sucherman shared backstage.



GAVIN HARRISON

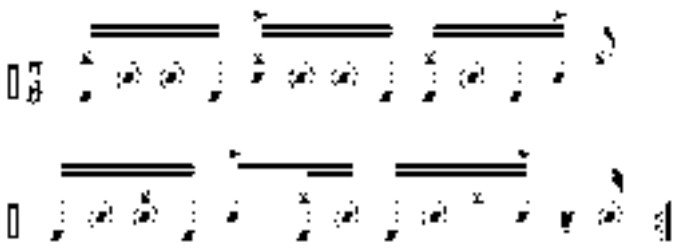
Simon Phillips returned to the stage on Sunday to introduce fellow Brit Gavin Harrison, the mind-bending rhythmatist for Porcupine Tree and the newest member of the recently resurrected King Crimson. With his masterful odd-meter technique and deep musical sensibility, Harrison seems to be everyone's favorite prog drummer these days. It was easy to understand why, as he performed flawlessly along with several odd-meter-laced tracks. Displaying brain-teasing polyrhythmic concepts with an understated double bass technique informed by a Bruford-meets-Bozzio aesthetic, Harrison also brought to mind a modern-day Neil Peart in terms of being "the thinking man's drummer" with a deep pocket and a musical mind.

Gavin's eye-catching golden madrone Sonor SQ2 kit sounded studio perfect. His footwork on the Axis Longboard pedals was that of a metal master, with blazing triplet flourishes and combination kick/tom patterns that left the crowd awestruck. No soloing was necessary; Harrison proved his prowess within lengthy, complex arrangements, most notably "Unsettled," from the CD he made with the bassist O5Ric. Another huge round of applause followed as Harrison was presented with his 2008 MD Readers Poll plaque for number-one prog drummer.

Click here to see video from the Festival

OVERRIDING IN SEVEN

Harrison is a modern master of odd-time drumming. The following example shows how a steady quarter-note ride pattern can make a 7/8 groove feel smooth and connected.



BILL STEWART

Sunday's headlining spot featured the undeniable jazz mastery of Bill Stewart and his quartet, who performed with jaw-dropping virtuosity to close this spectacular Festival. Stewart's dynamic set confirmed that the drummer remains one of the most distinctive and revered voices in jazz. The band played a variety of bebop and swing as Stewart danced across his compact, stylishly mismatched Gretsch kit with grace, passion, and unmatched sensitivity. His brushwork was mesmerizing and powerful, his swing feel unstoppable. And his deep rhythmic phrasing while comping behind the soloists was an art form all by itself. The cutting "ping" of Stewart's K Custom Dry Complex II ride cymbals could be heard clearly all the way up to the second-tier balcony.

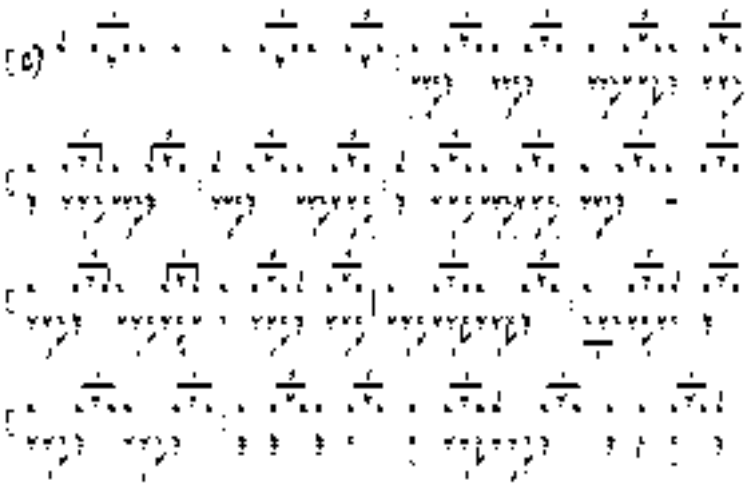
The quirkiness of Bill's playing style added even more emotion to the performance. His knees rocked his $6^{1}/_{2}$x14 hammered bronze Ludwig snare drum, while his hi-hat stand constantly slid away from him and his rack tom rotated when he dug in. This wrestling match with the kit was a physical aesthetic that completed Stewart's totally unique drumming style.

After a blistering, up-tempo bop encore performance that culminated with a spectacular and densely musical solo from Stewart, the remarkable weekend of diverse drumming super-talents came to a climactic close with a final standing ovation for Stewart and company.

Click here to see video from the Festival

LEFT-FOOT INDEPENDENCE

Even though his appearance on the Festival stage was performance only, in his interview Stewart broke down his very musical concepts into specific practice suggestions. Here's an excerpt of his demonstration of how to develop left-foot independence over a jazz ride pattern.



HUDSON'S MULTIMEDIA COVERAGE

Hudson Music's first-ever direct-feed, streaming online updates brought a new dimension in multimedia coverage to the Festival, allowing Internet access to photos and video uploaded fresh from the Hudson editing room. For the first time, clips from the MD Fest were seen around the globe in real time. Exciting indeed, but nowhere near as exciting as being there in person to witness the spectacle and raw energy of each performance, all of which will be talked about in drumming circles for years to come. But in case you couldn't make it, Hudson Music recorded the entire event in hi-def video.

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WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT...?

JOHN "DRUMBO" FRENCH

by Ken Micallef

The '60s certainly weren't short on genius musical iconoclasts. **CAPTAIN BEEFHEART** drummer John French facilitated the music—and the danger—of one of the decade's most notorious tortured souls.

One of the most unsung musicians of the '60s and '70s, John "Drumbo" French was the pioneering rhythmic force, arranger, and musical confidant for Captain Beefheart, aka Don Van Vliet, and by extension his groundbreaking Magic Band. Rivaled at the time only by the equally innovative Frank Zappa (who inhabited the same Southern California town of San Bernadino and was a friend and collaborator of the Captain's), Beefheart was a mercurial, occasionally mad genius who subjected The Magic Band to mental and physical cruelty while enlisting them in some of the most adventurous and profound musical experiments of the time.

One listen to Beefheart's undisputed masterpiece, *Trout Mask Replica*, is enough to convince anyone of the band's power—and of Drumbo's skill, ingenuity, and overwhelming rhythmic ability. As Beefheart sings in a bluesy, Howlin' Wolf fashion and The Magic Band—guitarists Antennae Jimmy Semens and Zoot Horn Rollo (Bill Harkleroad), bassist Rockette Morton (Mark Boston), and bass clarinetist the Mascara Snake (Victor Fleming)—plays contorted rhythms and melodies, often in crosscurrent odd meters, Drumbo creates a drumming language unlike anything heard before. His work on the seminal tracks "Frownland," "Dachau Blues," "My Human Gets Me Blues," "Hair Pie: Bake 2," and "Ella Guru" remains challenging and totally unpredictable to this day. Whether navigating odd meters or rolling in rubato, Drumbo plays wildly eclectic linear rhythms suffused with cowbell mumbles, backward-sounding hi-hat swoops, Africanized tom-tom rhythms, and an all-encompassing off-kilter time feel where a snare hit is likely to pounce on 1 as the bass drum slips in notes in between. At times, Drumbo plays melodic and rhythmic roles simultaneously, casting a spell that works its magic in conjunction with the band's guitars and bass.

Thirty years before such terms as *metric modulation* and *linear* became part of the drumming lexicon, Drumbo played with an inspired ferocity on a handful of brilliant Beefheart classics: *Safe As Milk* ('67), *Strictly Personal* ('68), *Trout Mask Replica* ('69), *Lick My Decals Off, Baby* ('70), *Mirror Man* ('71), *The Spotlight Kid* ('72), and *Doc At The Radar Station* ('80).

To top it off, Drumbo was responsible for putting Beefheart's concepts to paper—transcribing his unique ideas and then explaining the parts to The Magic Band. Beefheart, a primitive pianist, would pound out a phrase, and Drumbo would transcribe it. Then, after teaching the parts to the band, they would weave the threads into a musical quilt, all under Beefheart's watchful eye and menacing fifty-inch chest. Sadly, Drumbo never received any arranging credits or royalties for his considerable work with The Magic Band. And he was constantly booted

from the group, after rehearsal rituals that included threatened stabbings, sleep deprivation, forced malnutrition, and other forms of abuse.

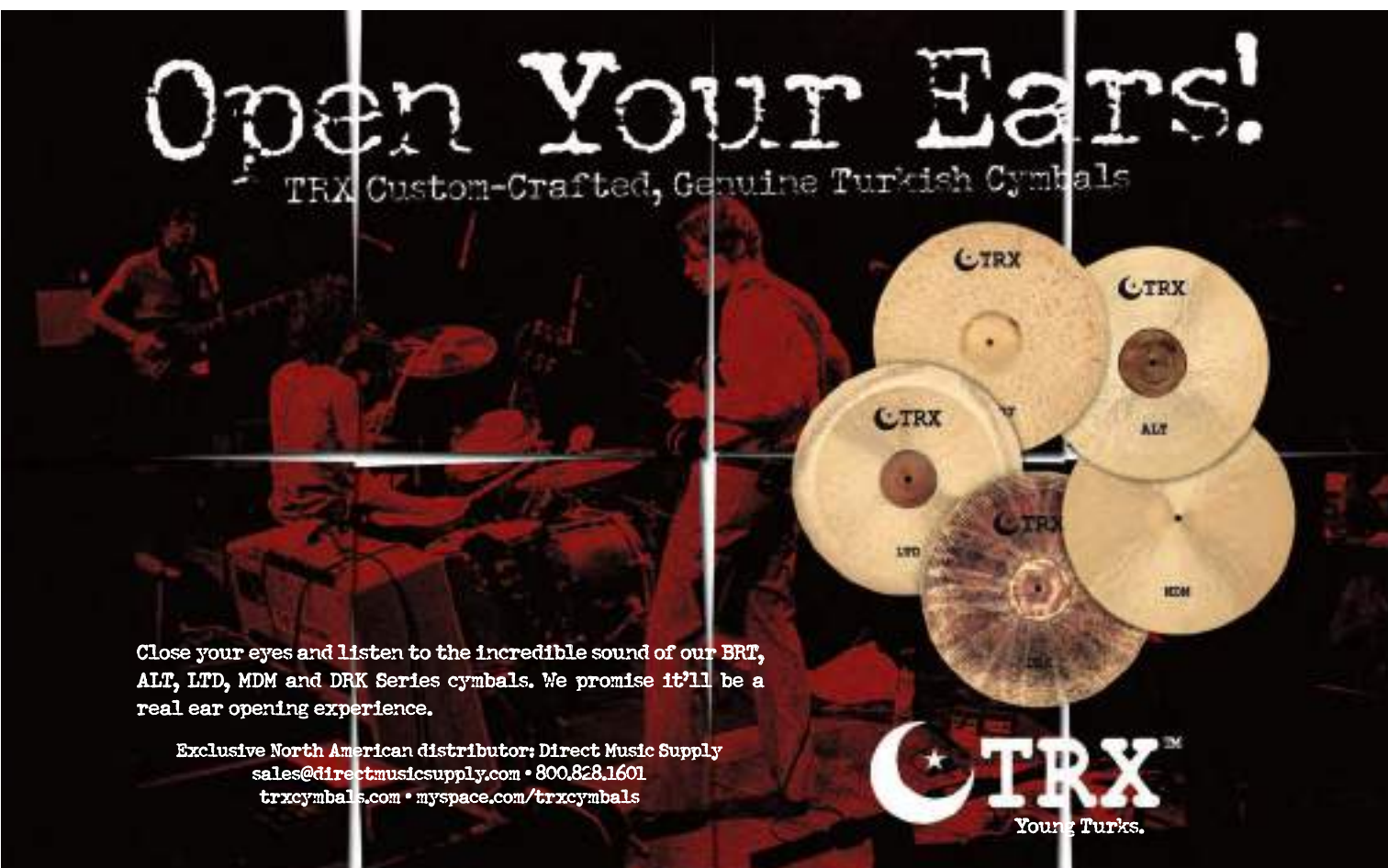
But Drumbo has thrived in recent years, re-forming The Magic Band and releasing two albums in 2003 (following two earlier solo releases); penning his autobiography, *Beefheart: Through The Eyes Of Magic*; and, most recently, singing and drumming on the brilliant *City Of Refuge* LP, which draws on the Beefheart legacy yet makes its own bold statement.

Regarding his innovations, Drumbo is matter-of-fact. "It came from the music Don was writing and from a vision I had in my head," he says from Lancaster, California. "I was influenced by Salvador Dalí, Joe Morello, Jack Sperling, Sandy Nelson, and a vision of myself playing this way. And with fourteen-hour-a-day rehearsals over nine months [for *Trout Mask Replica*], it happened.

"Sixty percent of the drum rhythms were things I wrote or figured out on my own that I thought worked with the other parts," he continues. "You might have three guys playing three different time signatures. *How do I drum to that?* I started writing parts where I might be playing two or three rhythms at once. That captured what everybody was doing."

Drumbo's playing with Beefheart remains inexplicable. Take the instrumental landmark "Hair Pie: Bake 2." As the guitars hiccup and swirl, the drums contort and thump, a double-handed hi-hat rhythm wrestles with crosscurrent tom figures, and cymbal smashes recall heraldic trumpets at a Roman gladiator event. A brief drum break gives way to a freak shuffle and is followed by a 6/8 rhythm dotted by Drumbo's cymbal glances and hi-hat percolations. It's like a swamp boogie with giant mutant ants.

"The drummer with Yusef Lateef would do these hi-hat swoops," Drumbo recalls. "Don loved that sound. There's a song on *Safe As Milk* called 'Abba Zaba.' There's a cowbell part on there, kind of a funky Afro-Cuban thing. I wrote and transcribed it as the hi-hat part. Then I thought about things that would work in between those notes, using both hands to create the hi-hat part. The kick drum played '1e,' '2e,' '3e,' '4e' with the snare on 1 and the tom playing other cross notes. It was a



difficult part that took four hours to work up. That beat is in 'Hair Pie,' with the cowbell pattern from 'Abba Zaba.'"

Initially recording during the 1960s heyday of LSD and nascent mind-control experimentation, The Magic Band willingly subjected themselves to Beefheart's threats and physical harassment, meals that often consisted of a single can of soybeans, isolation from family and friends, and, of course, a permanent lack of money.

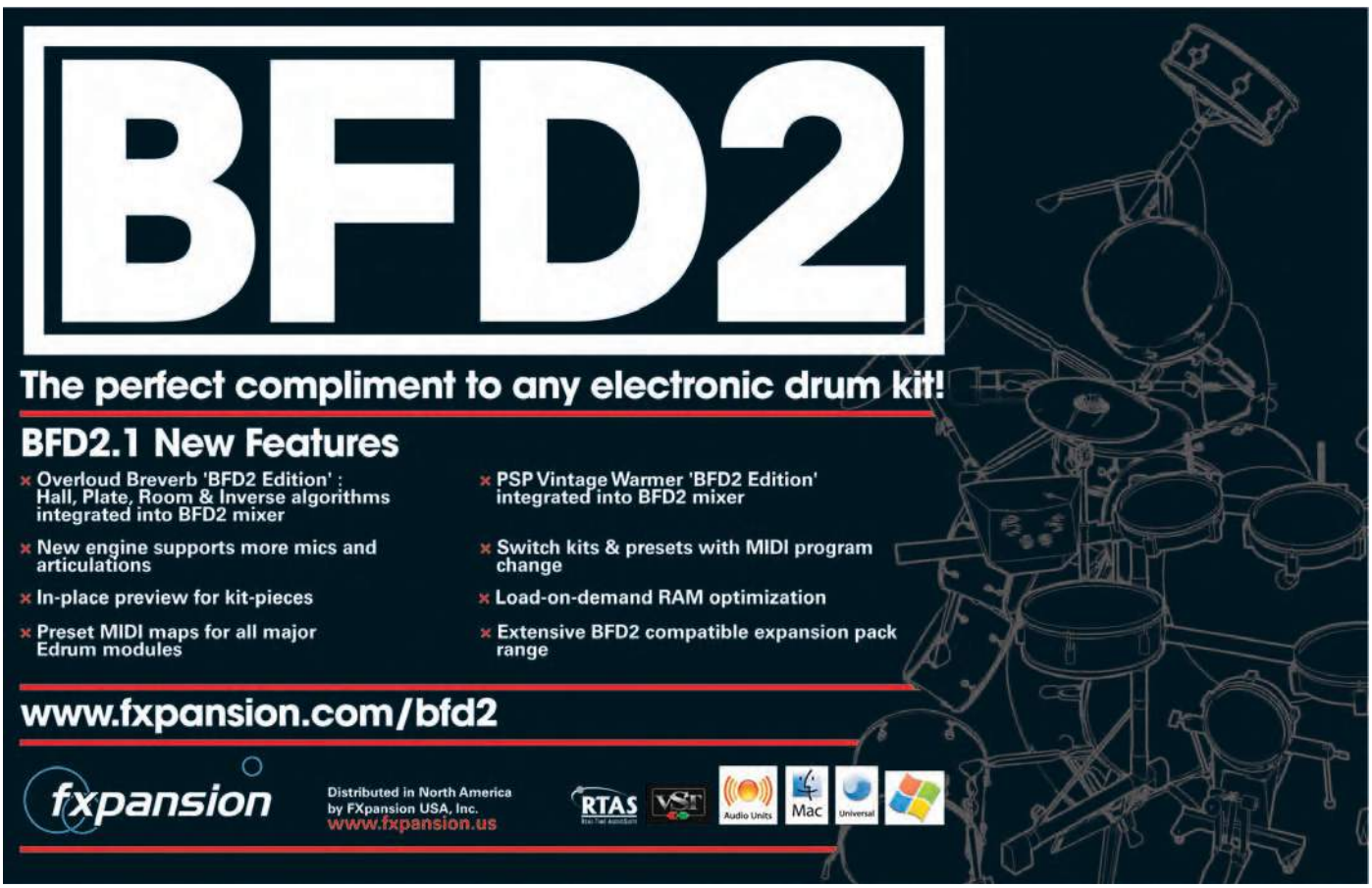
"It was pretty strange," Drumbo says, recalling the madness. "Why put up with that? One of my stock answers is that we knew we were creating something amazing, and that kept us going. We were all from a small town and were pretty naive, and I was only twenty. We all looked up to this guy who was about eight years older than us. It's like you walk into a tunnel. You're halfway through, you see the light at the end. And you're thinking, *Do I go back or forward?* I would rather see what's out there than what I've already seen. We knew that there was something really sick going on here, and it wasn't healthy. But at the same time we wondered if perhaps it was normal…maybe all bands did this."

Drumbo was seemingly sacked after every Beefheart recording, only to be drawn back in when the Captain needed his services. Beefheart would claim to see the error of his ways, but once the drummer returned to the fold, the old ultraviolence would begin all over again.

"He was like Charles Manson," Drumbo claims. "He was stronger than Manson, way more intelligent and powerful. His motivation was to control people for the sake of music, though, not for killing someone. He had this public persona that was so charming, like a politician. He was like two different people. I did wonder if someone should do this guy in, but I didn't want to wind up in prison. We didn't know how to handle it."

Doc At The Radar Station would be French's final record with Beefheart, and again he contributed his arranging/transcribing skills and drumming, as well as bass, guitar, and marimba. French went on to record the solo albums *Waiting On The Flame* and *O Solo Drumbo*. And he garnered rave reviews for his two albums with French Frith Kaiser Thompson, *Invisible Means* and *Live, Love, Larf & Loaf*.

When Drumbo led the 2003 re-formation of The Magic Band, the



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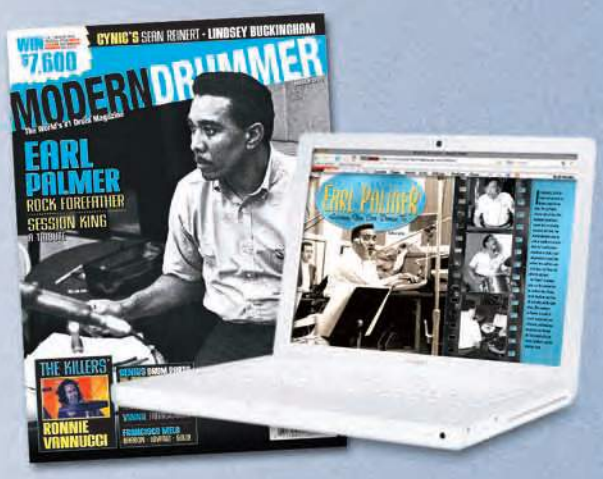

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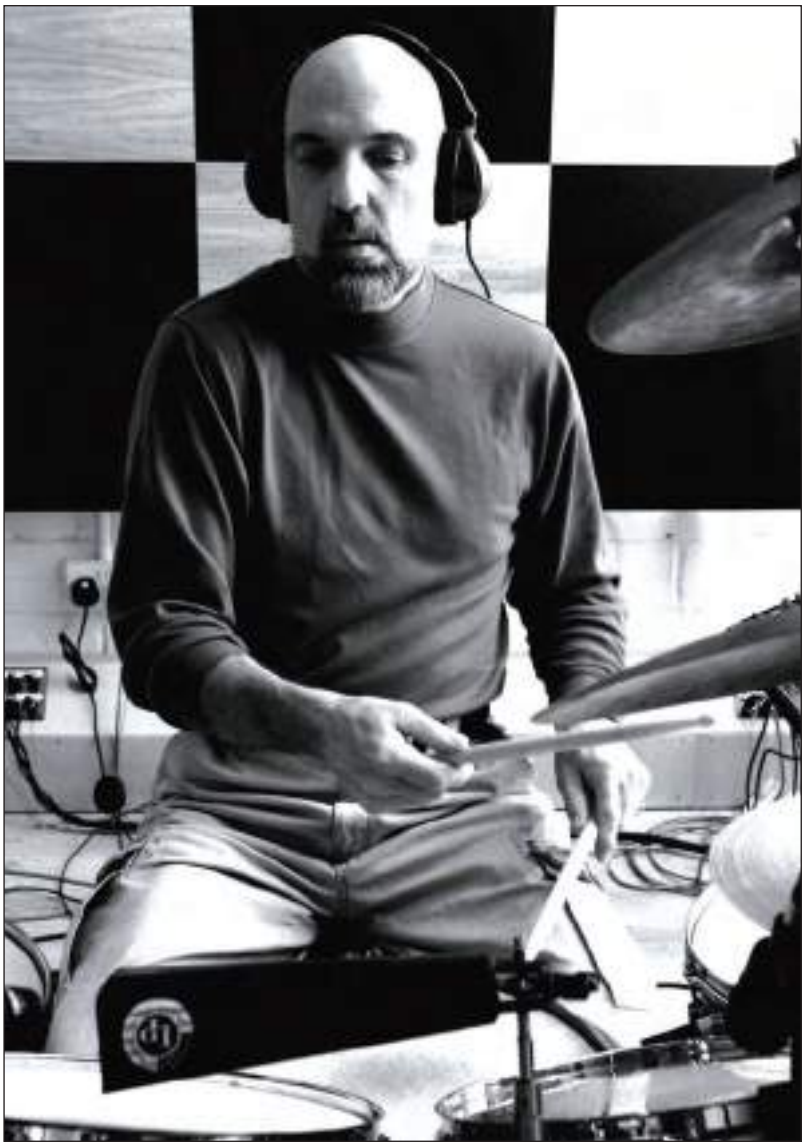
JOHN "DRUMBO" FRENCH

group's two records (*Back To The Front*, *21st Century Mirror Men*) were well received. That led to 2008's *City Of Refuge*, the full-circle evidence of French's talent. Singing and playing drums on songs that recall Beefheart, Drumbo, accompanied by two original Magic Band members and a couple of younger guns, brings his considerable abilities to bear on "Bogeyman," "Wicked Witch Of War," and "The Withered Hand Of Time."

French's drumming is easier to comprehend these days, but the magic remains. With his prospects revitalized and his autobiography about to be released, Drumbo has no interest—well, not much—in dredging up the past. Still, one wonders if he feels the sting of all those lost credits and unpaid royalties from years spent as Captain Beefheart's ultimate musical foil.

"It wouldn't do me any good to chase down those royalties," Drumbo confides. "Basically the ideas were all Don's; we culled them and arranged them into something that could be played by a group more than once and make sense—if any of that stuff actually does make sense! So I don't deserve writing credits, but I should have gotten arranging credits.

"I was very intrigued by Beefheart's music," Drumbo concludes. "Don had a monstrous voice, a really oddball style. He was a genius with lyrics. But I didn't do it for the money; I barely got paid. I did it for the heart involved, not for the dollar sign."



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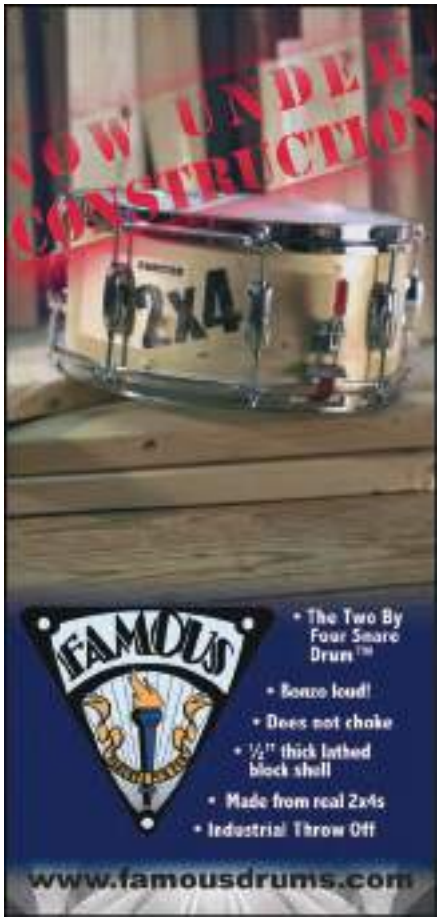
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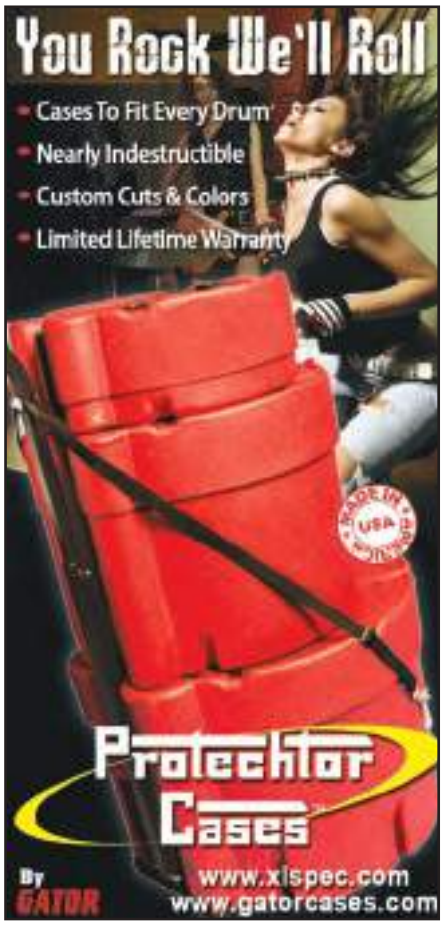
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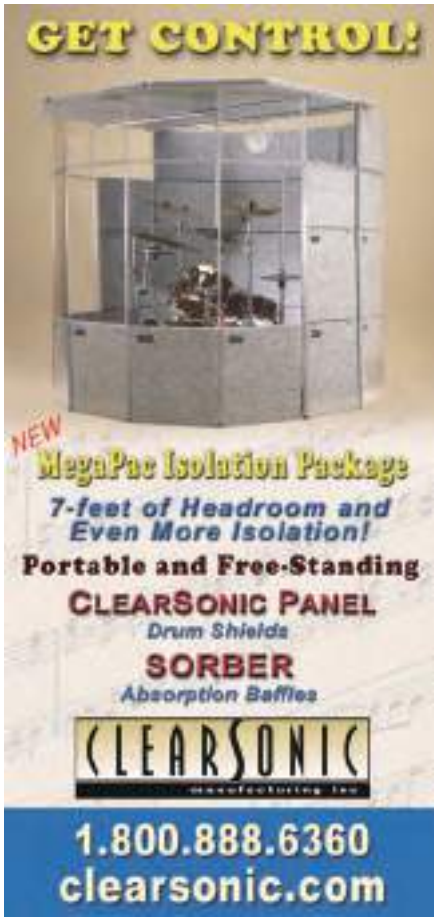
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RECORDINGS

★★★★½

PETE RODRIGUEZ EL ALQUIMISTA

Opening with an explosive drum intro that feeds into a haunting feel in three, **HENRY COLE** provides a superb foundation for trumpeter Pete Rodríguez and saxophonist David Sanchez on this excellent album. Cole's skittering, prodding approach beautifully complements the intertwining horns on "Who Do I Trust," but that's only one of the great moments here. Other highlights include the relaxed yet solid pocket Cole lays down on "My Patience" and the driving time feel of "Scorpion." Locking up with piano, bass, and conguero Roberto Quintero's spirited rhythms, Cole's playing—in both its jazz and Latin guises—is diverse, supportive, colorful, and confident. (Conde Music) **Martin Patmos**

★★★½

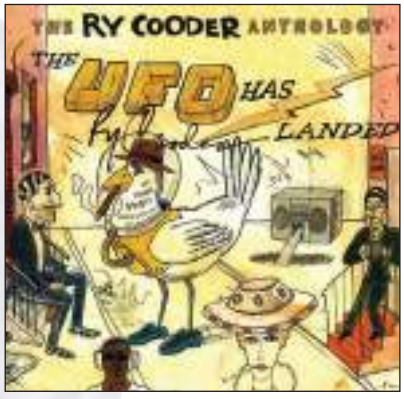
SALEM AS IT IS ABOVE SO IT IS BELOW

On Salem's *As It Is Above So It Is Below*, **TODD ANDERS JOHNSON** shows off not only his crisp beatmaking but his equally energetic singing (recalling John Mayer with a little more edge) and positive-vibe rapping (think Michael Franti). The band, which is based in Boulder, Colorado, offers up an entertaining blend of reggae, world, and urban-influenced groove music, including "Northward," which features a tight funk pocket and an organic rap that gives props to vegetarianism. Meanwhile, "Harvest" is a fat, horn-driven reggae blast—and you've gotta love the straight-up hip-hop of "Timeless," if only for the line "A sacrificial van brought me to Jack DeJohnette, and I haven't gotten rid of Horacio El Negro yet." (salem-music.com) **Robin Tolleson**

★★★½

D. RIDER MOTHER OF CURSES

Not married to drums sounding like, well, drums? Intrigued by the percussive potential of a spray-paint can? Then this album is for you. Of course, guitarist/singer/drummer **TODD ALBERT RITTMANN** often makes his spartan no-toms kit sound *exactly* like drums. It's just that sometimes he messes with the attack and decay, to pretty extreme effect. Add Rittmann's howling guitar leads and Bowie-influenced vocals, and you might be listening to a poppier, less proggy King Crimson demo. (Tizona) **Michael Parillo**



★★★½

RY COODER THE UFO HAS LANDED: THE RY COODER ANTHOLOGY

Drum sounds have always received a lot of attention on guitarist Cooder's work, as this anthology shows—from **RICHIE HAYWARD**'s deep toms on "Available Space" (1970's *Ry Cooder*) to son **JOACHIM COODER**'s kick-and-rims part on "Drive Like I Never Been Hurt" (2008's *I, Flathead*). But from a drumming perspective, this collection really belongs to **JIM KELTNER**, who not only plays on most tracks but cowrites two with Cooder, including the artfully produced 1987 instrumental "Low-Commotion." The groove Keltner settles into on "Crazy 'Bout An Automobile (Every Woman I Know)" is pure rock 'n' funk joy. Then he flips it, syncopates it, and shades it. "Get Rhythm" is yet another example of beautifully orchestrated rock drumming. (Rhino) **Robin Tolleson**

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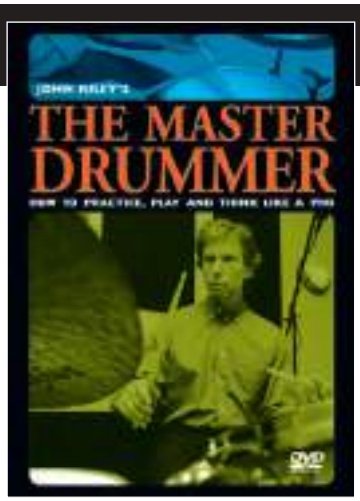

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JOHN RILEY THE MASTER DRUMMER

DVD/E-BOOK LEVEL: ALL $29.95

Subtitled "How To Practice, Play, And Think Like Pro," world-renowned drummer John Riley's new instructional DVD takes a jazz-centric approach to mastering any style of playing, based on the premise that since the drumset is a relatively young instrument (a hundred years old or so), the jazz drumming language is the foundation of most modern styles. Riley posits that all great players share four basic qualities: excellent technique, a strong groove, fluid creativity, and superior musicianship, so these are the areas he concentrates on. For each topic, Riley manages to convey enough basic information for beginners to benefit from, but he also offers unique and effective ideas to give advanced students plenty to work on. And the drummer peppers his commentary with invaluable anecdotes and lessons learned from mentors such as Joe Morello and Jim Chapin. As a further aid, all the exercises on the DVD are included as printable PDF files. Riley is exactly the type of drummer/educator serious students can embrace—calm, clear in his goals and methods, steeped in history, thoughtful, and, in his own decidedly un-hysterical manner, hugely enthusiastic and encouraging about the potential for greatness in each of us. Check this DVD out; you'll feel better, and play better. (Alfred) **Adam Budofsky**

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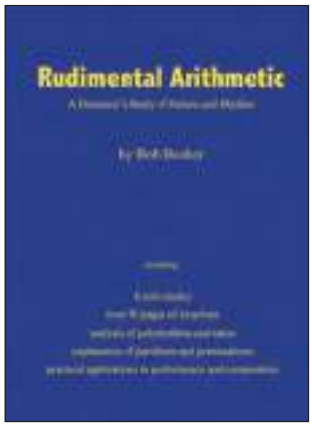


★★★★★

RUDIMENTAL ARITHMETIC: A DRUMMER'S STUDY OF PATTERN AND RHYTHM

BY BOB BECKER

BOOK LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED $60

Drummers familiar with George Lawrence Stone's *Stick Control* will be excited to see sticking combinations and permutations taken to the "nth degree" in Bob Becker's new book, *Rudimental Arithmetic*. From roll densities to polyrhythms, Becker carefully explains his ideas and how they apply to interpretation and improvisation. (Don't let all the text scare you!) The author breaks down rudimental patterns into endless combinations of rights and lefts in a dizzying array of meters, leading you to never look at a paradiddle—or at math—the same way again. Thirty-one pages of exercises and eight chops-busting snare drum etudes complete this 190-page spiral-bound book. (mostlymarimba.com) **Andrea Byrd**

★★★★½

RUSH MOVING PICTURES (ALFRED'S CLASSIC ALBUM EDITIONS)

TRANSCRIBED BY MARC ATKINSON

BOOK LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED $14.95

Neil Peart's drumming performance on Rush's *Moving Pictures* ranks among the greatest in rock history. This book collects the drum parts for that LP under one cover, and while it doesn't represent the first time some of these songs have been transcribed, it is interesting to have them in full album sequence. The transcriptions are generally quite good, and they highlight many of the beats, licks, and fills that made Peart a legend. Whether approached as a way to study Neil's style or as a method book for progressive drumming, this is a nice collection. Play along! (Alfred) **Martin Patmos**

★★★½

GUERRILLA DRUM MAKING

DVD LEVEL: ALL $41.99

Even players who have no intention of building their own drums might be entertained by *Guerrilla Drum Making*. The topic is presented here in a straightforward and calm manner—nearly all that's on screen are hands, tools, and drums. The DVD demystifies the drum-making process and clearly shows how possible it is for drummers with the time, vision, basic tools, and operating capital to create the kit of their dreams. I wouldn't have considered it before seeing this DVD, but now I'm seriously thinking about adding some kind of sunburst pattern to an old Ludwig kit I refinished badly years ago. (guerrilladrummaking.com) **Robin Tolleson**

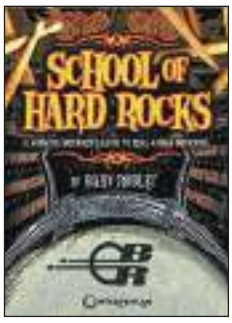
★★★☆☆

GROOVE AND TECHNIQUE: A PRACTICAL APPROACH TO MUSICAL DRUMMING

BY JOHN MCCOLGAN

BOOK LEVEL: BEGINNER TO INTERMEDIATE $19.95

Here's one for serious beginning drum students who want to take a modern, progressive approach. Though the author leaves a lot of stones unturned, he points readers in the right direction. While affirming the importance of the classic rudiments, McColgan chooses to use only those he feels are relevant today, and then introduces his own hybrid creations, alternate placements that open important musical doors. In a separate section on groove, he tries, through written examples and historical perspectives, to explain some styles and the slippery thing called feel. McColgan aims high and demands much—but for musically inclined beginners this book could be a real eye-opener. (johnmccolgan.com) **Robin Tolleson**



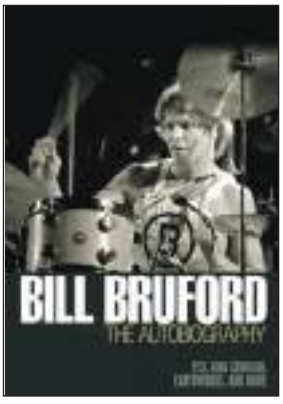
★★★☆☆

SCHOOL OF HARD ROCKS

BY BART ROBLEY

BOOK LEVEL: BEGINNER $15.95

School Of Hard Rocks keeps it nice and simple; in fact, the only instruments needed here are a kick, a ride, a hi-hat, and a snare. The seventy-seven pages are clearly written and easy on the eyes, with each lesson building on the previous one fairly slowly, allowing the beginner to take it all in before moving on. It would have been nice to see stickings for some of the exercises, as well as an explanation of dotted-note rhythms. But with lessons like "Accented 8th-Note Triplets With Bass Drum" and "Groove Independence," most of the essentials are covered. (Centerstream/Hal Leonard) **Fran Azzarto**



★★★★½

BILL BRUFORD: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

BOOK LEVEL: ALL $19.95

We can assume that a man who's recorded and/or toured with Yes, Genesis, King Crimson, Al Di Meola, Gong, and his own jazz band, Earthworks, will relate extensive personal experiences in his autobiography. And indeed, this is a good—but not a *great*—read when Bruford illuminates the indignities he's suffered at the hands of the music biz, Simmons electronic-drum malfunctions, and his interactions with the inscrutable Crimson leader, Robert Fripp. It *is* a great read when Bruford reveals, with economy and depth, his internal landscape—the emotional maelstrom of guilt, vulnerability, and exhilaration inhabiting the private moments of his life as a freelance musician. Bruford can be professorial at times, especially when discussing his musical philosophy (previously sketched in his 1988 book, *When In Doubt, Roll!*). But in general the text is intimate, clever, concise, and witty—a bit like Bill's drumming. (Jawbone Press) **Will Romano**

★★★☆☆

ROCK BAND: DRUM RECORDED VERSIONS

BOOK LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE $22.99

For those of us who want to be part of the hip crowd but who may never lay our hands on a video game controller, Scott Schroedl has transcribed twenty-five note-for-note drum charts from the hot video game *Rock Band*. Across the board, from Nirvana's "In Bloom" to Kiss's "Detroit Rock City," this book is a blast. Even The Who's classic "Won't Get Fooled Again" is included—and *every* drummer should run down a Keith Moon chart at least once. Each transcription contains bpm, a drumkit legend, and the ultimate helping hand: lyrics and melodies transcribed above the drum notation. When it gets tough, just sing along and you'll be back on track! No CD is included, so you'll have to rely on your memory, download the tracks, or buy the discs. Either way, now you can hang with all those gamers and not feel left out. (Hal Leonard) **Fran Azzarto**

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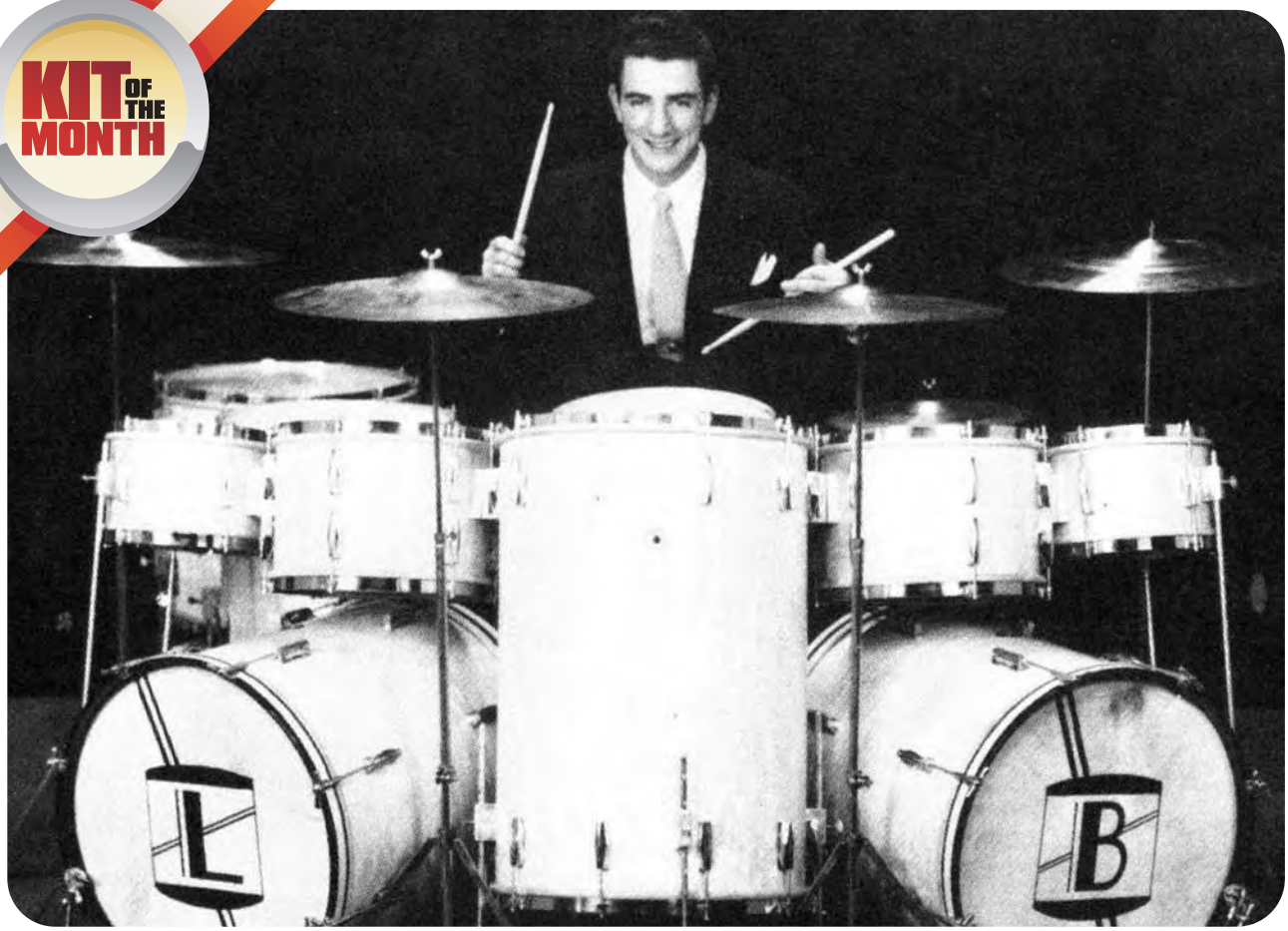
KIT OF THE MONTH



BACK TO THE FUTURE

Louie Bellson's First Double Bass Drumkit

The eureka moment came way back in 1938. That was the year a teenage Louie Bellson discovered he could kick a football with either foot. "This caused me to think, *How would it be to have another drum over there….*" Louie recalled years later. "So I drew up a design of the double bass drumset."

It took a few years to find a manufacturer willing to work with him on the concept, but in 1946 the craftsmen at the Gretsch Company viewed the design as a challenge. Gretsch's effort to help Louie realize his vision was spearheaded by drum promotion and sales manager Phil Grant, an inventor and a former percussionist with the Goldman Band in New York City. The kit that Grant and the Gretsch team created with Louie featured two 20x20 bass drums and a 26x18 floor tom placed directly in front of the snare drum. Symmetrically mounted on both sides were 9x13 and 7x11 toms, and the entire assembly was connected and supported on legs. The floor toms were 16x16 and 16x18.

These drums featured Gretsch's cross-laminated 3-ply shells, with $^1/_{16}$"-thick veneers of maple on the inside and outside and an $^1/_8$"-thick middle layer of poplar. Gretsch craftsmen laminated the plies as they molded each shell, joining them in three different places. This eliminated the need for reinforcing rings, which Gretsch believed "broke up the sound waves" inside the drum. The thin shells also allowed for a very thin bearing edge, which promoted projection and resonance.

Louie's futuristic configuration didn't catch on immediately in the big-band era. He debuted the kit with Ted Fio Rito's group in 1946, but the bandleader didn't choose to feature it. And Benny Goodman, with whom Louie worked next, preferred a more standard drumkit. When Bellson joined the Tommy Dorsey orchestra in 1947, though, things were different.

"Tommy made a big thing out of the kit because Tommy liked drummers," Louie told *MD*. "He'd had Gene Krupa and Buddy Rich, and he wanted a guy who could swing with the band and yet be a soloist. When he saw my two-bass-drum idea, he flipped out. We came up with the idea of a revolving platform. Tommy would press a button and the platform would go around in the middle of my solo. That way, people could see and understand what I was doing."

Though Bellson's setup would continue to evolve—with Duke Ellington, his bass drums became bigger and his toms fewer, and with the arrival of bebop in the early 1950s the bass drums got smaller and the toms fewer still—but the double bass concept that was at the center of his revolutionary 1946 kit would remain Louie's trademark to the end of his life.

Photo and background information courtesy of the Gretsch Company.

Photo Submission: Digital photos on disk as well as print photos may be sent to: Kit Of The Month, Modern Drummer, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009-1288. Hi-res digital photos and descriptive text can also be emailed to billya@moderndrummer.com. Show "Kit Of The Month" in the subject line of the message. Photos cannot be returned.

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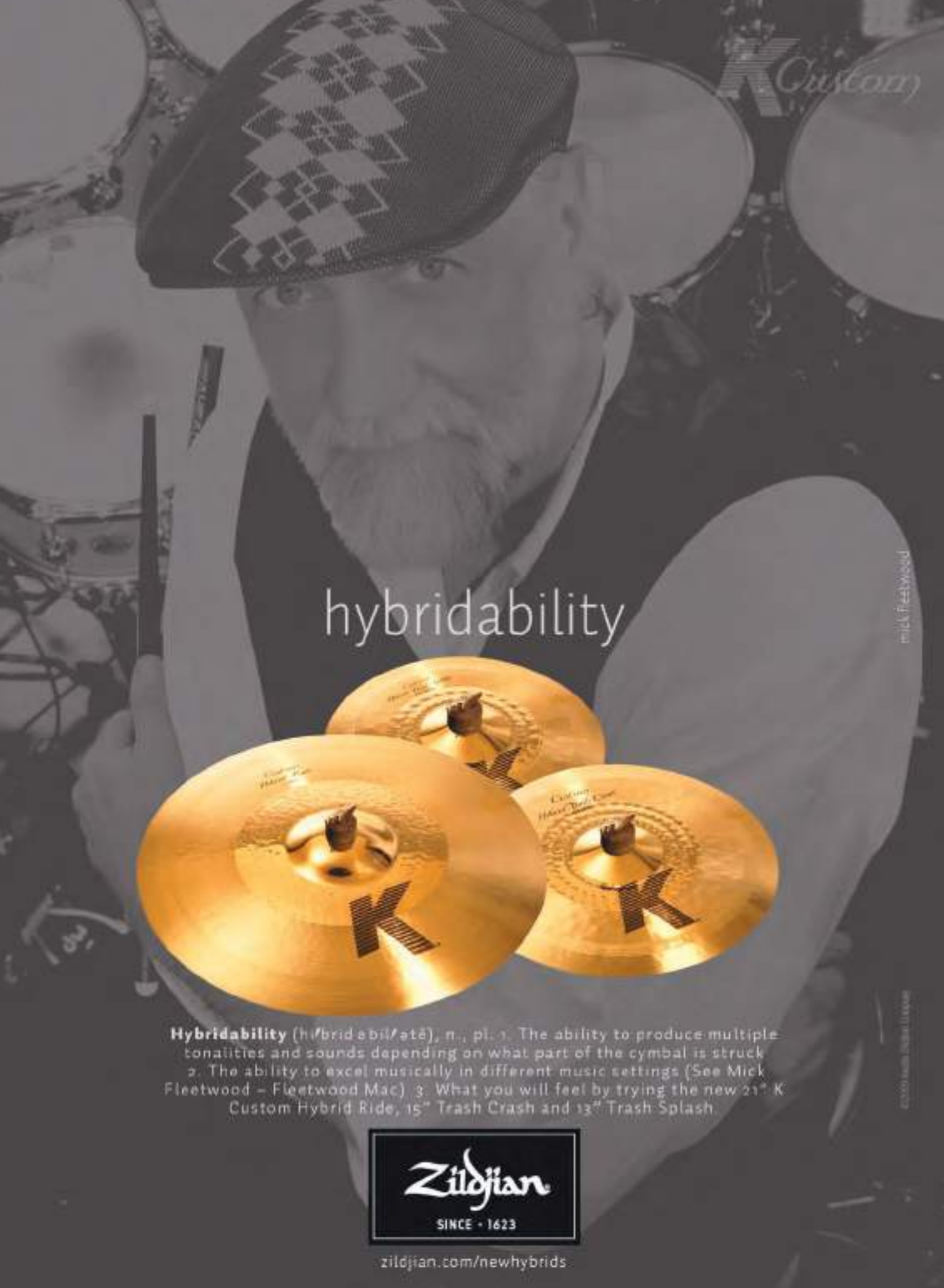

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